Prakash Magdum, Director NFAI, Pune

Prof Surjit Singh ... has painstakingly collected details and memories of the life of a near-forgotten actress who started her career in 1936 and worked with a number of important studios through the thirties and forties. By meticulously gathering material, Prof Surjit Singh has succeeded in not just recreating the acting life of Indurani but also providing a glimpse of the thrilling world of cinema in the years of the early talkies and after in India.

Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz', compiler, HFGK

I was thrilled when I heard that Prof Surjit Singh is planning to come out with a biography of a lesser known actress Indurani, who appeared in Hindi-Marathi films in thirties of the last century. Having myself gone through the research and dedication one is required to perform for such a painstaking exercise, and knowing Prof Singh, I am sure that he would have enjoyed working on this project. Another feather in the cap of Hindi film industry for which entire credit goes to Prof Singh. I am glad to note that he was lucky to get full support of the nearest family member (Mr. Salim Shah, son) along with other family members of Indurani in his pursuit. May his tribe increase to enrich the documentation of Hindi films, its songs, and personalities!

Salim Shah, Indurani's son

Prof Surjit Singh captures in a scintillating style the life and times of an age of Bollywood when artistes were contract employees. Some stars like Indurani worked hard to achieve success on screen and in life. Read more to find out how and why this came to be so.

Indurani

An Unsung but Unforgettable Heroine of the Early Talkies

PROFESSOR SURJIT SINGH

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Indurani: An Unsung But Unforgettable Heroine Of The Early Talkies

Professor Surjit Singh

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Glossary: It has been customary in books relating to India to include a glossary of the Indian terms. It seems that it is unnecessary to do so in the present Internet Age, when many reliable dictionaries and encyclopedias are online, and are available at the click of a mouse or the flick of a finger. Even so, the meanings of some words are provided.

By professor toofaanii publishers

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Indurani and her wonderful family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have been written without help from Indurani's family.

Thank you Salim and Francoise Shah, for inviting me to your home and sharing information about your mother, photos and food.

Thank you Hashmat, Lisa, Nagma and Ratan for sharing anecdotes and photos.

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Thank you Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz', for sending me copies of all the booklets of Indurani's Hindi films, and dedicating your life to the research of Hindi films and filmi people.

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A big thanks to my wife Harmesh, and three children, Jai, Libby, and Raja, and,

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Professor Surjit Singh

San Diego, CA
June 2017

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FOREWORD

The quest of compiling histories and micro-histories of Indian cinema is challenging and adventurous at the same time. It is a journey that requires passion, perseverance and, in some cases, even luck.

It is important to realize that preservation of the cinematic legacy of India does not just include the acquisition of films and film-related material but also the nurturing of an atmosphere where the study of film history is encouraged and facilitated.

India is a country where cinema manifests itself in a staggering variety of avatars. It is then unfortunate that only a few of these multiple worlds have been studied and explored at length. These blinding lacunae in the preserved and written histories of Indian cinema lead to another issue – public amnesia about the contributions of many to the grand story of Indian cinema.

Of course, there have been seminal attempts to correct this absence of comprehensive and complete filmographies. What they all reveal is the monumental nature of such a task. In this context, it is a pleasure to encounter works such as that of Prof Surjit Singh who has painstakingly collected details and memories of the life of a near-forgotten actress who started her career in 1936 and worked with a number of important studios through the thirties and forties.

By meticulously gathering material, Prof Surjit Singh has succeeded in not just recreating the acting life of Indurani but also providing a glimpse of the thrilling world of cinema in the years of the early talkies and after in India.

It is also significant to note that Prof Surjit Singh belongs to a larger network of Indian film aficionados who are working tirelessly and rigorously to introduce the rigor of research in the daily appreciation of forgotten Indian films and the people associated with their making.

This timely work by Prof Surjit Singh highlights another need of the hour. The responsibility of rescuing these forgotten stories and people of Indian cinema lies in the hands of all of us.

Prakash Magdum
Director, National Film Archive of India,
Law College Road, Pune. 411004.

PREFACE

Why I Wrote This Book

I had heard songs of the thirties and the forties when I was growing up because my father (who was really into classical music and played the 'sarangi' whenever he was in the mood) hummed a few of them occasionally. But, our house did not have a radio or a gramophone player. Mostly I heard the latest songs during the festival season and weddings or in the neighborhood soda water and 'paan' shops.

Nothing much changed to my mundane musical taste until I joined TIFR (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay[1]) in 1975. There, Mr Bharat Upadhyay, the Sound Engineer, used to play old songs every Wednesday noon. Once he played some songs from the albums, *Film Hits From the 40s, Volumes I and II,* this was the first time I really heard and absorbed Saigal, Noor Jehan, K C Dey, and, Kanan Devi among others, and I was hit by a life-changing lightning bolt!

Another lighting struck when my mentor and guru, Prof Raj Kumar Pathria, whom I have known since 1967, mentioned one day that one of the stars of the early talkies, Indurani[2], had lived right here in San Diego! He introduced me to her eldest son, Salim Shah.

One of my biggest regrets in life is that I failed to impress my rabid interest in the thirties and the forties upon Prof Pathria enough and, hence, I failed to know about or meet Indurani (1922-2012), even though I had moved to San Diego in 1998. I can only wistfully imagine what could have been learned from her about the heyday of the studios, the training of the actors, film shooting methods, about her so many co-workers, most of whom are now merely names in the filmographies, Geet Koshes, and booklets.

Indurani is not known to most people; even the well-known books on the history of Hindi cinema, encyclopedias, and Who's Whos of Indian Cinema do not mention her. But her life and work are a part of our unforgettable cultural heritage, and they must be preserved at all costs.

Hence this book.

---

1 For nostalgic reasons, old names of geographic places will be used.

2 Her maiden name is Ishrat Jehan Imamuddin (Siddiqui). Her screen name is Indurani. Her children call her Ammaji.

In Praise of the Unsung Artists and Their Fans

In contrast with Hollywood, where books have been written about little-known and forgotten actors, Indian film industry has only paid a lip service to them, if at all.

Before the Internet, a few magazines wrote a few articles, sometimes with photos, briefly mentioning long-forgotten filmi people. These were mainly once famous and moderately famous people. Once in a while, when it was found that a once famous person was living in poverty or seen begging, there was some interest for a short time. The famous film historian Nalin Shah mentions many such examples. *The Cine And TV Artists Association*, Bombay, has been somewhat active in this regard.

When the legendary compiler Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz' went around looking for people whose names he found in film booklets, he did a great service by writing details of his meetings in his periodical *Listeners' Bulletin.* Sad to say that the film industry did not do much.

The academic world ignored Hindi films for a long time. When Satyajit Ray and the so-called Art Cinema arrived, they took notice but still mostly ignored popular cinema. Finally, when the globalization craze came, people started publishing scores of books and papers on Bollywood (That is a Good Thing). But unsung filmi people still remain unsung by the academics, barring a few exceptions. I agree fully with people who say, art schmart, Cinema is Cinema, and, an Artist is an Artist.

With the coming of the Internet, it became possible for niche discussion groups about Indian films and their music to be formed and be productive. One such group, informally called the 'Mother of All Such Groups', *RMIM (rec.music.indian.misc)*, celebrated its Silver Jubilee in Bangalore, in April 2017.[3] In due time, many websites arose to display articles and photos of unsung actors. On my website, I am probably the first one to post photos of character actors whom one sees in pictures all the time, but even their names are not known to anybody except the die-hard fans.

At present there are many websites and groups devoted to the unheralded. Greta Kaemmer (*memsaabstory.com*) has been instrumental in 'outing' many such stars chiefly by corresponding with their relatives. It is because of her efforts that an obscure but ubiquitous back-ground dancer (Edwina Violette) is now famous and her biography has been written[4]. Among others, who are passionate about such matters, one might mention Shishir Krishna Sharma (*Beete Hue Din*), Atul Besra (*Atul's Song A Day*), Arunkumar Deshmukh (on Atul's blog), M N Sardana (Facebook group *Wo Din Yaad Karo*), Dr Ramnath Iyer Ashok, and Upendra Samaranayke

3 *The RMIM Minibus (2017)*, full references at the end.

4 *Edwina: An Unsung Bollywood Dancer of the Golden Era (2015).*

(Facebook group *THOSE WHO COUDNT MAKE IT BIG BUT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE WITH OUT THEM*). All of these people and many others have taken great pains to identify hundreds of lesser known artists and are continuing to do so, on blogs and Facebook groups.

Indurani was one such artist.

Hence this book.

In Defense of "Stunt" and Fantasy Films

"Stunt" films are known for their heavy dependence on stunts, i.e. special actions seen to be performed by the actors, actions which are not ordinarily possible. Examples include flying humans, dangerous actions involving horses, trains, autos, helicopters, and now, space stations. Fantasy films are based on tales such as the Arabian Nights, which are usually not high in the mind of high brow literary critics.

However, such films are nothing to be sneered at. They have been money makers since the beginning of the cinema (*The Great Train Robbery* 1903), and are still making billions of dollars under the name of Action-Adventure-Fantasy-Superhero-Science Fiction films (*Bahubali* 2015*, Bahubali 2* 2017).

Believe it or not, stunts have been with us from the days of the theater. For example,[5]

> **The mechanical devices to operate flying figures and furniture, imported directly from melodramas in London, shaped the textual scenarios. The melodramatic style occasioned by stage machinery became so popular that, in a sense, conventional storytelling was redrafted.**

After Dadasaheb Phalke produced his first Indian feature film, a mythological, others followed suit, but public soon became obsessed with the "stunt" films.[6]

> **The mythological film was to dominate Indian production for some years, but rival genres would begin to compete for attention. In the 1920s the film of modern background, the "social", rose in importance, and the**

5 See pp 341-2, *The Oxford Companion to Indian Theatre (2004)*

6 See p 20-2, *Indian Film (1980).*

> **Indian "historical" had a beginning. At the same time the "stunt film", inspired by the popular serials and by the features of Douglas Fairbanks, became an obsession with Indian producers.**

This "obsession" continued in the early talkies as evidenced by the "stunt" films made by the Wadia brothers and their justly famous star, Fearless Nadia. Here is Girish Karnad talking about Nadia,[7]

> **The single most memorable sound of my childhood is the clarion call of 'Hey-y-y-y-y-' as Fearless Nadia, regal on her horse, her hand raised defiantly in the air, rode down upon the bad guys. To us school kids of the mid-40s, Fearless Nadia meant courage, strength, idealism.**

Another reason for the popularity of these films in those days was somewhat nationalistic. The producers could not show contemporary political themes because of the British Raj censorship, but they could talk about far-away lands with tyrannical kings and the popular rebellion by everyday heroes. These heroes and heroines could give speeches about unjust laws and the absolute rule and arouse their filmi audience to rise up and revolt.

Audience for such films was usually made of what are disparagingly called 'four-anna-wallas', or *chawanni-chhap* people. And, more than half of Indurani's films are of the type "stunt", fantasy or costume dramas.

I hereby declare myself to be a *chawanni-chhap* fan of Indurani!

Hence this book.

7 See, pp 84-90, *Cinema Vision, Vol 1, issue 2 (1980).*

WOMEN IN EARLY HINDI FILMS

When I was growing up in a small village in East Punjab, I was taken to a few talkies, the first one was *Shrimatiji* (1952), in Dogar[8] dee Talkie! I wondered what people did when there were no talkies. My father told me that there were actually silent films, and before that, there were stage plays. I had seen stage plays, because in the fifties, my uncle was a member of a local drama club and they did plays, and, of course, the 'Ram Leela'.

A Problem Arises

Before the stage plays, India had other means of mass entertainment, but the plays slowly pushed everything away. The modern theater came from Europe and like everything else, enterprising Indians jumped right into it. But very soon they encountered a unique problem: who would play the female roles? The European theater companies did not have this problem, because Europeans had come a long way since Shakespeare and the female roles were played by females now. However, in India most women were not even allowed to go in public without a responsible male, let alone take part in a play.

Three Solutions

Indians had three solutions to this problem.

Firstly, young men were employed to play women's roles. Some of them became very famous, e.g. Bal Gandharv of the Marathi Theater, Jayshankar Sundri of the Gujarati Theater. Even Master Fida Husain, who later became famous for the role of Narsi Mehta, started his career as a female impersonator. My uncle, mentioned above, played the role of Sita in 'Ram Leela' because he had long flowing hair. The main disadvantage of using boys was that they grew up and the theater company owners had to keep looking for more young lads.

The second solution was to use European or Anglo-Indian ladies. Mary Fenton of Irish origin was perhaps the most famous of them all. But there were many others. The problem with this solution was that most of these fair ladies did not know how to speak and sing in Hindi or Urdu and it was time-consuming and expensive to train them.

The third solution was provided by many courtesans, nautch girls and other marginalized females, who were brought in for theater roles. They

8 The actual name of the cinema hall was Moti and it was owned by Dogar Mull.

knew how to speak the local languages fluently. And, they could sing well, that being their forte! Gohar Jan became very famous but many others are known, e.g. Miss Fatima, Miss Malika, Miss Bijli, Miss Gulnar.[9] But because of this, the theater workers developed an unsavory reputation. Both men and women acting in the theater came to be looked down upon.

The cycle was repeated in the early silents. The father of the Indian cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke, had difficulty getting reputable females to act in his films.[10]

> **... no decent woman would think of acting in a film. In fact, Phalke knew that he could not ask a decent woman to do so.**

Phalke eventually found a male cook Anna Salunke, whom he lured by offering better pay. He played the role of Taramati in the first feature film and, played the roles of both Rama and Sita in *Lanka Dahan* (1917). Actresses of European, Jewish or Anglo-Indian origin were next to be used. Many are well-known, e.g. Sulochana, Patience Cooper, Sita Devi.

A curious example is the feature film *Nala Damayanti* (1920), made by the Elphinstone Bioscope Company, Calcutta, owned by J F Madan, in which the main roles were played by two Italians, Signor and Signora Manelli.[11] Eventually courtesans also started showing up in the silent films.

Believe it or not, when the films started talking, it happened again. But by now young boys were not needed because enough females were acting in the theater and the silents and they could just keep working. However, again, because of the talking, singing and dancing requirement, many females had to drop out. But others continued working by learning Hindi/ Urdu, e.g. Sulochana. And new ones such as Fearless Nadia showed up. The 'bais' (courtesans) also continued working, but the questions about their reputations lingered.

In time, out of necessity or curiosity, educated women from reputable families entered the talkies. From Bombay, Durga Khote, BA, is usually considered to be the first. The film industry was expanding, new studios were coming up, they all needed new heroines, preferably, young, attractive, from good families, with some level of education, comfortable in working in front of strangers and, of course, being able to speak Hindi and Urdu

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9 See pp 210-1, *पारसी थिएटर: उद्भव और विकास (1981) [Parsi Theater: Origin and Development]*.

10 See pp 13-4, *Indian Film (1980).*

11 See p 24, *The Indian Film (1980).*

fluently. According to a story in *filmindia*, talking about *Saraswati Cinetone*, [12]

> **... and one of their "steel frame" has been advertising in North India for heroines.**

Indurani, Sarojini and later others (e.g. Madhubala) filled this need admirably!

12 *filmindia*, p 48, vol 1, issue 1.

THE STUDIO SYSTEM

For the pioneers of cinema things were difficult. Still a few enterprising individuals in many cities took it upon themselves to obtain the financing, buy the equipment, learn how to use it, learn how to develop and print the exposed film, find the players and make films. They hired people on a monthly salary with contracts, and the studio system was born.

Early financing was obtained by borrowing money from family and friends. Once the films were seen to be earning money, the traditional lenders (but not the banks) were persuaded to lend money. The financial needs kept increasing. For example, new equipment was needed for the talkies. So, films needed to be made quickly and cheaply. This was done at first by simply filming the stage plays, or imitating stories from Hollywood, or shooting many films at the same time. Ranjit Studios is reputed to have made as many as nine films in one year!

Life in a Studio

All the processing was done in the studio at night, while the shooting took place during the day. The laboratory was attached to the studio and had its own staff. Processing included developing, editing, and any tricks involving double exposure or other special effects. Initially the negatives were developed in short lengths, a shot or take at a time, later continuous printers arrived. In the early days one or two technicians did everything, they had to know all the technical aspects of film making and there was no specialization.

Here is Durga Khote talking about Prabhat Studios,[13]

> **In those days the scripts were completely ready.... We knew, far in advance, what songs and what dialog we were to render.... At Prabhat we were to report at work at 5:30 in the morning and we knew that shooting would be definitely over by 4:30 in the afternoon. There was no departure from this routine as shooting was done in sunlight and no artificial lights or arcs were in vogue then.... We were called for work at 5:30 because it took two full hours for make-up with the hard grease of old**

13 See p 89, *Indian Film (1980).*

days. By 8:00 we were ready for "take" and by tea-time we used to pack up as no more shooting was possible with the fading sunlight.

As mentioned above, in the beginning the studios filmed stage plays, the actors came from the theater. They stayed on to act in films because the life was easier here and they could live in one city instead of traveling from city to city. The actors were rehearsed and directions were given during the shooting. When talkies came, the theater-trained actors were taught not to speak or sing too loudly, and, do so not to the invisible audience but to the camera and the microphone.

Every studio had its dedicated roster of actors on its payroll. Ranjit Studios probably had the largest number of stars of those days. Among the people who had worked with them at one time or another, one list has Raja Sandow, Master Vithal, Saigal, Khursheed, Madhuri, Sulochana, E Billimoria, Motilal, Ishwarlal, Charlie, Dixit, Kesri, Jagdish Sethi, Kumar, Zia Sarhadi, Bulo C Rani, Khemchand Prakash, Chaturbhuj Doshi, Manibhai Vyas, Gyandutt. Of course, Gauhar was their most visible star.[14]

Downfall of the Studios

Once in a while the studios loaned their stars to others. At other times they poached by enticing them with higher salaries or better terms. Here is an early example involving the hero of the first talkie, Master Vithal. He was on contract with the Sharda Film Co, Bombay, and was so successful in the silent movies that he was known as India's Douglas Fairbanks. Imperial Film Co, Bombay, offered him more money, so he quietly went to work for them. Nanabhai Desai of Sharda, somehow found out. He went to Bombay to meet him and convinced him to travel with him to Poona. Once there, Desai locked him up in a room, but treated him well. He tried to persuade him to return to Sharda, but Vithal did not budge. Imperial found out and sued Sharda. Sharda hired Mr M A Jinnah (yes, the same one) and Imperial hired another famous lawyer Sir Jamshedji Byramji Kanga.[15] Long story short, the judge asked Vithal whom would he rather work for. He said the one that gave him more money! So, an auction ensued right there in the court room, and Imperial won by offering Rs 750 per month, whereas a typical star in those days got Rs 300.[16]

Soon the stars realized that a lot of money was being made with their names, so they started going to the highest bidders and moving on when

14 See, pp 33-34, *नई दुनिया फ़िल्म विशेषांक (1994) [Nai Duniya Film Special Issue]*.

15 For his biography, see p 177, *Who's Who in India, Burma and Ceylon* (1938).

somebody offered more money. Other filmi people like story writers, music directors, and lyricists followed suit. This was one of the factors that led to the downfall of the studio system.

Another reason was the growth of the independent laboratories, not attached to any studio. This made it possible for independent producers and directors to hire actors and technicians at will to make pictures. Also, the studios with multiple stages started to hire out their premises to independent producers, in a bid to make more money.

For other reasons for decline and a very decent discussion of the studio system, see the chapter about the studios in the book edited by Rani Burra.[17]

16 See, pp 98, *नई दुनिया फ़िल्म विशेषांक 1992 [Nai Duniya Film Special Issue]*.

17 See pp 52-61, the chapter, *The Rise and Fall of The Studio System,* in *Looking Back 1896-1960 (1981).*

INDURANI'S BACKGROUND

In preparation for this book, I went through all my magazines, *Hindi Film Geet Kosh*, my audio/video collection, and the articles by Arunkumar Deshmukh on Indurani, published at *memsaabstory* and by Shishir Krishna Sharma on the actress Azra (Indurani's sister Sarojini's daughter), published on his blog *Beete Hue Din*. In addition, Salim Shah (Indurani's eldest son) sent me all the correspondence he had had with these bloggers and Harish Raghuvanshi.

This material raised many questions in my mind. For enlightenment, I requested Salim Shah for on-camera interviews, to which he readily agreed. On two Mondays in May 2017, I had the pleasure of visiting his home, recording interviews with him, meeting his gracious wife Francoise, enjoying tea and snacks, and capturing many old photos of Indurani and family. Since then Indurani's other children have been sharing their thoughts and anecdotes about her.

The main question in my mind was:

> *How did Ishrat and her elder sister Roshan, teenage girls from a middle-class family from Daryaganj were going to school in the 1930s and how did they end up in a film company in Poona for screen tests?*

Salim Shah and other members of the family provided the answers!

Her Parentage

Indurani's mother, Munawwar Jehan was one of the earliest female pupils of the famous Delhiite Hakim Ajmal Khan (1863-1927), and was trained to be a practitioner of Unani system of medicine in his college. She liked her girls to get an education.

Another reason was that Indurani's father, Sheikh Imamuddin Siddiqui had the job of transporting young girls from their homes to the Baptist Mission Girls School and back, and was admonished by the Principal for not bringing his own daughters to school!

The Teenager Bride

But the story really starts with a runaway teenager, aged about 15 years. This girl was from a rich and high caste Goud Brahmin family of Allahabad. Her marriage had been fixed in the usual way prevalent in those days. There were usually 'gossip' ladies who kept track of boys and girls of marriageable

age and tried to match compatible families with each other. A matchmaker was called dalla[18]. Of course, in this arranged marriage system, boys and girls never saw each other until the actual wedding.

In those days weddings were long affairs lasting many days with various ceremonies. For example, for a period of one month and 10 days before the actual wedding, they had the 'rat jagaa' (all-nighter). This usually included 'dholak' playing, singing and dancing. And the bride was smeared with 'ubtan', a paste made of turmeric, sandalwood and other ingredients.

So, one night, after the usual pre-wedding ceremonies were finished, dalla went to the bride who was sitting in a room at the end of the 'haveli'. She told her that she was being married to an 'ugly man with pock marks'. Because the bride was tall, straight and very fair, this must have made her very sad.

The matchmaker asked the bride to meet her late at night when everybody was asleep, at the neighborhood 'chauraha' (crossing). She told her that they would run away together and dalla would get her married to a very nice boy. She also mentioned, by the way, to bring all the money and the jewelry with her.

As planned, the Brahmin teenager waited for everybody to fall asleep, and then collected the money and the jewelry. She had to pass through three partitions between the rooms ('dehleez') carefully, avoiding everybody including the night watchman of the 'haveli', whom she found sleeping. Then she had to open two sets of iron doors by herself, but she was determined to go through with it. She walked a block and found the dalla waiting for her at the crossing. Both of them went to the Allahabad railway station and boarded a train. In the morning, her family members woke up and found both dalla and the bride missing. In Indurani's words, "**dalla dadi ko bhaga ke le gayee**" (loosely translated, dalla helped the girl elope.)

The teenager bride, having been tired from the ceremonies fell asleep on the train. This gave the opportunity to the matchmaker, who according to her well thought out plan, took all the jewelry and the money and disappeared.

When the bride finally woke up and realized that she had been duped, she was scared and in shock. All she could do was to sob and keep sitting in the train compartment. This may very well have been her first train ride. When the last station Lahore came, she just sat there crying, not knowing what to do and thinking about what could happen to her. Eventually, the train cleaning crew found her. They told her that that was as far as the train would go and she had to leave. She refused to budge and kept crying.

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18 The word seems to be the spoken version of the word dallaalaa (Arabic origin) from written Hindi/Urdu.

They then went and told the station master, Fateh Singh, about this crying girl. When he learnt her story, his first thought was to send her back to her parents. But she knew that having run away from home and disgraced her Goud Brahmin family, she would never be accepted back and would be killed. So she cried even more.

Fateh Singh fell in love with this fair-complexioned beauty and took her home. At first his mother would not agree to him marrying her because they were Khatri and the girl was Brahmin, but he was able to persuade her. So, because of the decency of Fateh Singh, this runaway girl was saved from a fate worse than death that usually befalls abandoned and runaway teenagers.

Hashmat (Indurani's eldest daughter) has mentioned an interesting facet. When this young girl was growing up in Allahabad, she used to go for bathing in the Sangam area, where the rivers Ganga and Jumna meet. When she was in Lahore she used to take regular baths on the banks of the river Ravi. She preferred to take baths in river water.

They had four children, the eldest son, then Sant Singh, Bahadur Singh, and a daughter Sunder. [The name of the eldest son is lost.] Sunder married Baburam and they had a daughter called Munni, who married Harnam. Munni with her husband moved to Delhi and had a son. The two brothers, Sant Singh and Bahadur Singh also moved to Delhi, became fascinated by Islam and secretly became muslims. Even so, during the Diwali festival, Sunder used to send boxes of 'mithai' (sweetmeats) to her brother Sant Singh's house. Sunder and her family lived in Ballimaran area of old Delhi and child Indurani visited her often.

Talking about Sant Singh, Salim Shah mentioned that he was an educated and successful businessman:[19]

> **Kucha Tarachand was the residence of the Fateh Singh clan. I suspect that with my grandmother being a child, her widowed mother was encouraged by her in-laws under influence of Arya Samaj to marry and move in with the Digamber Jain friend of Sant Singh who lived with them for over ten years. His family are the benefactors of Indraprastha College (IP college) of Delhi. He was disinherited by his Jain family but being well educated he must have found a livelihood to support his family. He married another Muslim woman in order to sire children. With that, Zubeida must have moved with her teenage**

19 All the quotations from Indurani's family are almost verbatim, with very minor changes for consistency.

daughter into a place near Kucha Tarachand after marrying her off to her nephew Sheikh Imamuddin. I know one of the places they lived was Lal Kuan area of old Delhi. The place must have been close enough for my mother to stop by Kucha Tarachand to request the English newspaper for her older sister Afroz.

Among other things, Sant Singh used to trade in Cotton, Sugar and Chilies in various towns in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. He had seen young Zubeida in her village and liked her. Later when he saw her in Delhi, he married her.

Her Paternal Side

The paternal side of Indurani's ancestors was originally from Saharanpur, but during the chaos of 1857, moved to a small town called Sultanpur near Saharanpur. Her great-grandfather was Sheikh Ibrahim, nickname 'Mangoo' (last name Siddiqui). The nickname sounds strange but consider this. In those days, infant mortality was high and many children, male and female did not survive. So the parents did all kinds of things to assure that their children, specially sons, would live. Some prayed in Gurdwaras, Mandirs, Dargahs and other places of worship. Others did atypical things. In this case, the child was given away to another family or a place of worship and then they asked for him, hence the name 'Mangoo' (the one who was asked for).

Sheikh Mangoo married Allahdi from the same town, Sultanpur. They had four sons: Sheikh Imamuddin (b 1894), and his younger brothers, Siddique, Ismail and Shabbir. The eldest son, Imamuddin was Indurani's father and her children called him Bhaiji.

Nagma (Indurani's third daughter) related this sad incident from his life. Saharanpur district, which is in the northern part of the fertile land lying between the Ganga and the Jumna rivers, has been known for its mangoes and basmati rice. Sheikh Mangoo, whose family lived in a town near the city owned mango orchards. The fruit trees and other crops, specially the saplings, fall prey to birds, so somebody has to keep a watch over them. Usually there is a ramshackle loft called the 'machan', on top of which the watcher stands shooing away the birds by making noises. The teenager Imamuddin used to do this duty for his father's orchards. Usually lunch and dinner are brought right there. One stormy evening his mother Allahdi brought him dinner. That day the storm was particularly bad. It was difficult to walk back to the house, so Bhaiji asked his mother to hide in a hole in the trunk of a tree. Unfortunately, in the morning when the storm was over,

it was learnt that his mother had died from fear and cold.

Sheikh Mangoo had a very beautiful sister Zubeida, nicknamed Nathia. She was 20 years younger than her brother. When she was young, her father was obligated to marry her to a boy, but he did not like that boy at all. So he asked his servant Bade Miyan[20] to take young Zubeida to Delhi to hide. One time he took beautiful Zubeida to the banks of the Jumna river. Sant Singh happened to be there and saw her. He asked them what they were doing there and brought them home. He ended up marrying her. In due time, Zubeida had a daughter Munawwar Jehan (b 1904).

In those days, there was a custom among the muslims of Sultanpur to exchange daughters by way of marriage. So, when Zubeida's daughter Munawwar came of age, she was married to Bhaiji (in 1914). As was customary at that time, the 'gauna' (the consummation) took place about 2 years later. Munawwar Jehan was Indurani's mother and her children call her Apaji.

Thus Bhaiji and Apaji (Indurani's parents) started their married life in a house in Kucha Tara Chand, near Chitli Qabar area of Daryaganj, Delhi. And that is where Indurani spent her childhood.

20 Bade Miyan was originally a Hindu called Chhote Lal, who became Muslim under Sheikh Mangoo's influence. He later came to live in Santa Cruz with Indurani. He worked as a watchman and spent his days outside the small gate under the neighbor's 'avla' tree.

HER EARLY LIFE

Nagma has an interesting story about Indurani's first night on Earth:

> **Born in Delhi in the summer, so on a hot night she was on a 'charpai' (cot) after birth. Baby Ishrat on her first night ended up at the end of the 'charpai', with head sticking under the loose openings of the rope ends. The house cat's eyes were set on the baby and the cat could smell the cord blood. She luckily survived and I believe that was the first of her 9 lives.**

The earliest memory Indurani had was being lost in a fair. As told by her to the family, she went to a nearby fair and got separated from her father. Apparently, some unscrupulous female just took her away to her own house. Indurani's father looked for her frantically and reported the incident to the police. A reward was declared for her safe return. It was indicated that she was of light skin, was wearing a frock and had light brown curly hair. [Her nickname was 'Bhooree' because of her hair color.]

In the meantime, the mother of the woman who had taken her scolded the perpetrator. She told her that she herself was dark-complexioned and nobody would believe that the kidnapped girl was her daughter. She would surely end up with a noose around her neck if the girl was not returned. The woman got scared but did not know where Indurani lived. Although Indurani was hardly two years old, she found her way through the winding streets of Old Delhi and returned home with the culprit. Her grandmother Zubeida and mother Munawwar Jehan were so happy to see her that they dried their tears and, not realizing what had transpired, rewarded the criminal. When Bhaiji came home, he told them that they should have turned the woman over to the Police.

Another memory about Indurani involves her great-grandmother, her mother's grandmother, the famed teenager from Allahabad. The Goud Brahmin lady visited their house often but, being a high caste Hindu, would not touch anything and would not eat or drink anything either. But she always needed to eat 'paan' (garnished betel leaf). She would ask the child Indurani to go and buy it from a neighborhood shopkeeper, but have him tie it with a string so that the child Indurani would not touch it directly. Again, because of the strict Hindu cleanliness rules, she would not eat the 'paan' if a Muslim (even her own relative) had touched it! So Indurani would instruct the shopkeeper (Hindu, naturally) to prepare the 'paan' and tie it with a long string. Even after all those years, Indurani could still see

herself dangling and swinging the 'paan' through the streets of Chitli Qabar to bring it to the Brahmin lady!

In Delhi, Indurani's father Bhaiji started an independent business of managing victorias, owning 17 of these carriages. According to *Wikipedia*,[21]

> **The victoria was an elegant French carriage, possibly based on a phaeton made for George IV. A victoria may be visualized as essentially a phaeton or brougham with the addition of a coachman's box-seat, but not enclosed and therefore open to the elements.**

Among other things, he had a contract with the Baptist Mission Girls' School[22] in Daryaganj to ferry the girl students from the neighborhood to the school and back.

The Baptist Mission in Delhi was established in 1818 and was affiliated with the Baptist Missionary Society in London. The purpose of the Mission was to cater to the medical and educational needs of the natives, and, of course, to convert them to Christianity. A chapel for the converted natives was built in 1854 and boys' schools were started. A Medical Mission was established in 1876, and a dispensary was opened for use by the converts and poor people. The Baptist Zenana Mission was started in 1865, mainly to provide instruction to Muslim girls and women. The Baptist Mission Girls' School was started about two years earlier and the girls were taught English, Hindi, cooking, sewing and other domestic duties.

As mentioned earlier, when the school Principal found out that he had daughters, Bhaiji was shamed into enrolling his daughters. He was afraid that he might lose his contract of ferrying local girls to the school. So his daughters Afroz Jehan (b 1918) and Roshan Jehan (b 1920) started to go to this Mission school to get education. Indurani (b 1922), who was merely 3 years old, insisted on going to school with her sisters. The girls really liked studying and enjoyed school thoroughly. In fact, as Salim told me,

> **Afroz got a gold medal in high school, topping the city. That won her a chance to go to Cambridge, but her father would have none of it. Finally, he consented to let her get a 2 year teacher certificate. She became a principal in a small school in Delhi.**

21 See the article on Victoria (carriage). By the way, phaeton was called 'Fittan' in Hindi/Urdu.

22 See p 68, *Gazetteer of the Delhi District (1883-4).*

I was unable to find the school in any of the contemporary Delhi government listings. It probably closed down after independence, if not sooner.

Indurani remembered a few anecdotes, related to me by Nagma. When she was in the third grade (age 7), her teacher told them a story about a very rich man of Delhi, who lost everything because he was robbed of all his wealth consisting of money and gold coins, and his big factory burned down. The poor guy was left standing wearing only his 'tahmad' (loin cloth). The lesson was, the teacher told them, that if he had education, nobody could rob him of that. Also with the implication that with education, he would have been able to become wealthy again. Indurani took the message to heart, devoted herself to her education. She decided that nobody would be able to top her, even if they were getting tutored. ***"Ilm sabse badi daulat hai"*** (*Knowledge is the greatest wealth.*) became her life-long motto that she instilled in all her children.

At another time, when she was in grade eight, in the Algebra class she got the correct answer to a problem, even though the book had a wrong answer. The teacher Ms Zeenat put her name on the board, ahead of 32 other girls.

Her Parents

All seemed to be going well when, unfortunately, Sheikh Imamuddin got addicted to gambling at card games and lost a bunch of money. When he went as far as selling her jewelry, Munawwar Jehan had to do something to take care of her family, specially children. She decided to enroll in the *The Ayurvedic and Unani Tibbia College*, popularly known as *Tibbia College*. The college was started in 1916 and was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi. Here she was fortunate enough to be taught personally by Hakim Ajmal Khan.

Now, Hakim Saheb came from a long line of practitioners of Unani medicine. In fact, some of his ancestors were royal physicians in the Mughal court.[23] He was a well-known nationalistic Muslim who, besides running the college, was also instrumental in the establishment of the *Jamia Millia Islamia University,* in 1920, in Aligarh. He was also its first chancellor. [It was moved to Delhi in 1925.]

Nagma recalled

> **Apaji also learned midwifery. To be able to do this, afeem [opium] was rubbed under the children's nostrils, so she could get rest at night. Her hair oil formula became very famous. Famous producer Nasir Hussain**

23 See pp 297-304, *Eminent Mussalmans (1926).*

came to purchase her oil as his hairline started receding, as a child I was so fascinated because he paid her 100 rupees, which was a large amount at that time. The oil was steeped in herbs, 'avla', 'shikakai' etc., and sun-baked for a month. My duty as a child was to bring it in every night. His hair started growing again with this Unani formula. Apaji delivered a 1000 cases of babies. This was a remarkable feat, she did not lose a single child or life. Quite a feat in those days.

In those days, wives generally had to take care of the whole family, including many young children. Giving a bit of opium to children to help them sleep seems to have been a common practice, according to what my late grandmother told me.

Once Munawwar Jehan obtained the required diploma, she started reading the newspapers to look for job opportunities. Her husband was not too happy about all this, but that could not deter her. In the end, she showed remarkable courage, by physically re-locating, all on her own, to practice medicine, first in the Janjira State on the Konkan Coast in Maharashtra, and, later, in the Tonk State in Rajasthan. One presumes that this risk-taking gene came from the runaway teenager, the one who left everything behind.

After Indurani became a film star, her mother came to live with her in Bombay. For a while, her eldest sister Afroz, her husband Dr Bashir Kapoor (originally from Jullundhur) and their children lived in the Delhi house. Later Dr Bashir who was a medical doctor and worked in Willingdon (now Ram Manohar Lohia) Hospital moved the family to the hospital staff quarters. His family later ended up in Multan in Pakistan.

While in Bombay, Munawwar Jehan kept herself busy. She planted a mango tree, which produced large reddish mangoes during the season. She also visited Sarojini and Naseem in the Khar house where they lived and prepared delicious meals. Nagma again:

... her 'nuskhas' (medicinal formulas) were so good, including the small candied apples that were so super delicious and whole preserved lemons.... Her 'koftas' were hand crafted with each one wrapped around chopped mint and onions. Her chutney from semi raw mangoes with mint and onions beat any mango salsa of today. Having 'aftari' with her during Ramadan has

special memories of 'kachalu' and 'shami kebabs'. 'Gulgale' from her were most enjoyable for us children. She died from cancer of the epiglottis due to tobacco in her paan. We were fascinated by her paandaan as kids. My best memory of her is when she prayed over me during my bath. She recited 'ashahodin laillahaillala' whilst pouring water over me. She died at age 65.

Coming back to Sheikh Imamuddin, he overcame his addiction and tried his hand at various businesses. He started a rifle and gun selling business mainly catering to the hunting enthusiasts. The business flourished during the British Raj, but came to an end during the Congress Government Raj after 1947, when his license to sell was taken away.

He had a knack of repairing mechanical and electrical gadgets such as bicycles, watches, clocks, radios and gramophone players. Later, when Indurani was in Bombay, he used to visit her often. He used to ride a bike to the Chor Bazaar area of Bombay to buy old radios, gramophones and records to repair and sell.

Around the time when Munawwar Jehan was the lady doctor of the Tonk State harem, Bhaiji moved to a small town, Sironj, near Bhopal.

Sheikh Imamuddin Bhaiji passed away of natural causes at the age of 84.

HER LIFE IN FILMS

An Offer for Acting

In those days, school going girls like Ishrat (Indurani's birth name) and her sisters Afroz and Roshan were not allowed to see films. However, Roshan, the elder sister of Ishrat read filmi magazines and became a fan of movie stars. From what the family has told me, we can piece together a likely scenario.

Roshan wrote a fan letter to an actress of Saraswati Cinetone, Poona, whereupon, the studio sent a nice letter back thanking her and sending an autographed picture of the star. She then took some money out of her mother's purse, went to a photo studio, or perhaps a Rupee 1 photo kiosk, and sent a photo to the studio with another note.

I have never read anything like that before. Normally, you write a fan letter, may be nothing happens, may be you get a photo, and that is usually it. Of course, if you really want to be in the movies and you don't know anybody in the film line, there are very few options: you run away from home to Bombay, you appear in a Talent Contest, you answer an ad like the one issued by Fazli Brothers.[24]

What happened is both predictable and not. The 'not' part is that Saraswati Cinetone wrote back saying that she should come to Poona for a screen test, and, if found suitable, she would be given a contract at Rs 300 per month. The offer letter could not be hidden from the father, who thrashed her, as can be predicted.

What happened next is not so unusual for those days. We know of many examples where parents of young children visited studios in the hopes of getting their children into films. The most famous example, perhaps, is that of another Delhiite, Ataullah Khan, and his daughter Mumtaz Jehan Begum, who became world famous as Madhubala.

In the case of Ataullah, he had lost a job, so he thought of films. In the case of Imamuddin, (as mentioned earlier) we are told that he had a gambling problem and was constantly in debt. His victoria business was apparently not bringing in enough money. After his anger over her daughter's prank died down, he thought about the letter from Poona. He was not sure if it was a real letter, and did not want to go to Poona for nothing. So, he consulted a cinema manager, who happened to be a Maharashtrian, and he assured him that the studio was well-known and the letter was real. This gave him more ideas because Nagma mentions that he

24 See p 1, *filmindia*, *July 1943*

also took the photos of the two girls in the Rupee 1 kiosks and sent the photos to other studios.

In any case, he decided to go to Poona with Roshan and Ishrat. Ishrat was in grade 8 and was very brilliant in her studies. She did not want to go and cried a lot, but her father prevailed. So, all three of them, father and two daughters, went to Poona. [Some time during 1935.] They found a place to stay, visited the studio, had screen tests done, and, having passed the tests, obtained two contracts, each at Rs 300 per month.

Saraswati Cinetone Co, Poona

After taking an advance of Rs 1,000 from the studio, and giving Rs 10 to the girls, Imamuddin left for Delhi, and sent their grandmother Zubeida to take care of them.

The first thing the studio did was to change their names, from Roshan Jehan to Sarojini and from Ishrat Jehan to Indurani. The studio paid them regularly. Not only that, as was the custom, the studio also paid for their training for dialog delivery, singing, dancing etc. This was needed because the girls had absolutely no acting experience and did not know any of those things.

At that time the studio was making a talkie, *Savitri* (1936), in Marathi. Since the girls could not speak Marathi, they were given non-speaking parts. Fortunately, the film is available on YouTube[25], and at least Indurani can be recognized. She played the role of a young friend of the heroine and appears briefly during the second song, *yaa kaay vadat pratimaa*. It is possible that Sarojini is there too in long shots. Unfortunately, all of Indurani's other films either got destroyed or are untraceable.

Indurani remembered that during rehearsals, she was supposed to walk in a certain way from point A to point B punctuated by a clap of hands by the director Bhal G Pendharkar and the producer Dada Torney. The latter was a very caring and gentle person who treated Indurani and her sister as his daughters.

In Poona, they befriended a co-worker Vasantrao Pehelwan, who was also starting out in films. He had an imposing figure and was a wrestler as the name indicates. He went on to be an important fixture in mythologicals and fantasy films, e.g. *Veer Ghatotkach* (1949) and *Ab-e-Hayat* (1955).

It is confusing as to what happened next. According to Indurani, as told to her family, the film flopped, the studio closed down and all the employees were let go. There is a corroboration that something went wrong. If one looks at the reports about the Saraswati Cinetone published in *filmindia*, one finds that no shooting was taking place in the studio for almost two years after *Savitri* (1936). So, something surely went wrong.

25 YouTube channel of Rohit Padalkar, wrongly listed as *Sati Savitri*.

On the other hand, Isaak Mujawar's book on Marathi Cinema[26] declares that the film was very successful.

In any case, they had to leave Poona, and having tasted the life in film line, such as it was, decided to go to the mecca of film production, Bombay.

Indurani Goes to Bombay

They did not know anybody in Bombay, but Vasantrao Pehelwan, whom the girls called *Uncleji*, helped them. He knew that Hindu Colony in Dadar was a good place to be, so that is where they rented a flat. Since Vasantrao was also looking for a job, presumably he spread the word about two Hindi-speaking beautiful young girls from Delhi, who had already been employed by a famous Poona studio. Of course, their grandmother was with them to look after them. That is where they met other struggling actors.

Even though Indurani was in demand, she missed being in school and still cried about it. So her grandmother Zubeida, who loved her very much, hired a teacher to continue her learning of English. The teacher lived next door and was an acquaintance of a struggling actor, Prem Adib. Prem had come from Uttar Pradesh to look for work in films. He had been unsuccessful and had to work in a nearby Irani restaurant to make a living. Indurani helped him get a break into films and they were together in her first film in Bombay, *Pratima* or *Prem Moorti* (1936).

Indurani fell in love with Prem Adib[27] but his family being Kashmiri Pandits, did not permit him to marry her, a Muslim. Prem Adib, later became a star in the role of Rama in the blockbuster *Bharat Milap* (1942).

It appears that their presence became known at first to the Marathi producers, because, soon, V Shantaram came calling. After doing the usual formalities, he offered a contract to Indurani at Rs 300 per month. The story goes that she insisted on having a contract offered to both her elder sister Sarojini and *Uncleji* Vasantrao. Shantaram laughed and said that he might consider Sarojini, but she should forget about Vasantrao. But, Indurani, with nobody to guide her in such matters, insisted and Shantaram walked away.

After this *Uncleji* left and they started visiting the various studios. Sarojini acted in three films and Indurani in ten, before joining Mohan Pictures in 1937. Just before that she had a contract with Minerva Studios. There Indurani saw films being shot and actors and actresses in action. She met Durga Khote, Naseem Bano and Leela Chitnis. Since Naseem Bano's real name was Roshan, the same as Sarojini's original name, Indurani could

26 See p 37, *Maharashtra, Birthplace of Indian Film Industry(1969).*

27 Prem Adib is the father of Salim Shah, Indurani's eldest child.

not resist calling out Roshan's name whenever Naseem Bano was nearby!

One time, Indurani lit up a cigarette in a long holder, just like Leela Chitnis, who was using it as a fashion accessory aping Hollywood actresses of the time. Sohrab Modi, who treated the young aspirants as his daughters, scolded her and she never smoked again. He also admonished her for wearing nail polish and she never did that again too. In another instance, when an adult-type 'mehfil' was going on, the sisters tried to sneak in to watch. Sohrab Modi scolded them and asked to go away.

While the sisters were waiting to appear in a Minerva film, Indurani's life took another turn.

Mohanlal Shah, a partner in Mohan Pictures, saw a big poster of the movie *Bulldog* (1937) in Super Talkies, Bombay. There was Indurani in all her beauty. He was so impressed by her looks that he decided that they should hire her for their studio. So, he sent his nephew Ramniklal Shah (Mohanlal's partner) for this task. Ramniklal took his friend Nanabhai Bhatt with him and went to Indurani's flat.

At this time, Indurani had already been hired by the Minerva Studios at a salary of Rs 450, but Ramniklal offered Rs 500. When she wondered how to get out of the contract with Minerva, Ramniklal mentioned that, she being a minor, the contract was not legally binding! So she and her sister Sarojini walked over from Minerva Studios to Mohan Pictures, for a gain of Rs 50 a month. Indurani spent the rest of her filmi career at Mohan Pictures, where Ramniklal fell 'head over heels' in love with her.

As Indurani told Nagma, she had rejected at least two other suitors before saying yes to Ramniklal. The famous actor Jayant (real name Zakaria Khan, father of Amjad Khan of *Sholay* 1975 fame) wished to marry her but he smoked a lot. Character actor Hari Shivdasani had also expressed an interest, but she found him to be too flamboyant. He is the father of Babita, famous actress from the 60s and, grandfather of Karishma and Kareena Kapoor. In fact, once when Kareena came to Los Angeles for shooting, Indurani wanted to meet her and tell her about Hari Shivdasani, but it could not be arranged.

After some time their only brother Naseem Siddiqui also came to Mohan Studios to try his luck. He started as an assistant director under the studio's resident director, Nanubhai Vakil. He was the one who arranged an 'imam' to perform the 'nikah' of Ramniklal and Indurani in a simple ceremony in 1939. Naseem also arranged the 'nikah' of Sarojini with Nanubhai Vakil.

Ramniklal and Mohan Pictures

Ramniklal Nanchand Shah was a Jain whose ancestors migrated from the Saurashtra region of Gujarat in the late nineteenth century to the

Mysore state. Ramniklal was born in Vartej near Bhavnagar in 1910. He tried many ventures, including becoming a touring talkie operator, carrying his equipment from place to place. Later he joined forces with his uncle, Mohanlal Tarachand Shah to set up film distribution in the South Circuit. Once when a Kurla Road studio in Andheri, Bombay, could not deliver films for which they had given funds in advance, they took over the studio and renamed it Mohan Pictures. Their firm, Ramniklal Mohanlal and Co, with offices on Khetwadi Main Road, Bombay, besides owning the studio, also owned the Broadway Theater in Dadar, and Mohan Talkies in Bhavnagar, Gujarat.

Mohan Pictures studio had four sound stages and had an attached processing laboratory. Although it was owned by the uncle-nephew team, it was 'run on cooperative basis by the staff'.[28] It was probably bought in 1935 or 1936, because they had already produced *Danger Signal* (1937), *Kul Deepak* (1937), and were in the middle of producing *Bhedi Trishool* (1938), *Chabukwali* (1938), *Cyclewali* (1938), and, *Jungle Ka Jawan* (1938), before they produced their first picture with Indurani, *Veer Bala* (1938).[29] In fact, in the book *Films 1944* (Roopbani Publications, publisher unknown), there was an article on Ramniklal with the headline, *The Man Who Produced More Pictures Than He Is Old*. Later, the studio stages were often rented out to other producers, e.g. a portion of *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) was shot on one of these stages.[30]

In the meantime, after having arrived in Bombay, Indurani had been busy making pictures too. It appears that she was affiliated with many studios, perhaps acting as a free-lancer. As can be seen from her filmography, she had already acted in *Ishrat Ki Maut* (1935), *Shree Satya Narayan* (1935), *Savitri* (Marathi, 1936), *Fida-e-Watan* (1936), *Pratima* (1936), *Bull Dog* (1937), *Insaaf* (1937), *Meri Bhool* (1937), *Mr X* (1938), and, *Sunehra Baal* (1938) with half a dozen producers, before she was hired by Mohan Pictures.

With Mohan Pictures, she made 13 films in five years (1938-1942, one was released in 1949), working with many famous actors and directors. The pictures were of various types, fantasy, mythological, "stunt", costume drama and social. She played a variety of roles, and, in a few of them sang songs for herself, according to Salim. Unfortunately, except for the Marathi film mentioned earlier, none of her movies is traceable. The ones with

28 See p 114, *Indian Motion Picture Almanac & Who's Who* (1953)

29 See, *Hindi Film Geet Kosh, Volume 1* (1988).

30 According to Salim Shah, who accompanied Ramniklal to collect the rental check of Rs 10,000 from Shapoorji Pallonji Mistry, the financier. [It was 1958 or 1959.]

Mohan Pictures perished in a storage facility fire in early 1950s, a fate met by many other studios' films, notably Ranjit Studios.

As was the custom in those days, the studios operated as a well-oiled machine. Very professional story writers, screenplay authors, dialog writers, lyricists and music directors prepared the ground work. The director and the cameramen knew exactly what to do. Like in an extended family everybody knew what was expected of them, arrived on time, finished their assigned duties with gusto. That is how the studios in those days were able to make so many films every year.

Indurani was very hardworking and prepared herself well before the takes. She bought the most expensive cosmetics and had a big say in her hair styles and makeup. She did not enjoy the male-oriented studio environment where studio workers and extras were always using foul language towards one another. She preferred to stay in the office of Ramniklal. When he found out, he asked her not to use his office. She threatened to quit on the spot and he had to relent.

Indurani was pretty successful, because, according to the family lore, she was written up in the *Times of India*, Bombay, as the youngest home owner at age 19 (in 1941) having bought land and built a house on Indranarayan Road in Santa Cruz, Bombay! The house was designed by a famous Bombay architect Noorani, and was called *Ishrat Bungalow*. The house had an outside garden structure. It was called the summer house. The children spent many hours playing in it. It even had beds for resting. Since the time when Indurani left India permanently to live in US, the house has been partly used an office for a major construction company and a high rise building has been erected on a plot next to it. Because she was working so hard, she had servants to take care of the house chores such as cooking, gardening etc. She had a governess to take care of the young children.

Indurani enjoyed her work and wanted to continue working in films. But, a tragedy occurred in 1942. She was pregnant with a child, when during a stunt shooting, the horse ran very fast, and she lost the pregnancy. Because of this, she became depressed for a time. In addition, her husband was not in favor of her working in films any more. Still, she continued her dancing and singing training well into the 1950s, hoping to get back into action. Many producers and directors came to see her; in particular, Bimal Roy was keen to make a film with her. But Ramniklal not being supportive and other producers not willing to annoy him, she did not work in films any more.

Indurani's eldest daughter Hashmat tells a story from about 1950, when her mother sitting on the marble steps leading to the house, was cleaning some wheat, before it could be given to servant to take it to a mill for grinding. A producer or a director came and told her that he wanted to meet Indurani. She lifted her eyes to look at him and said, *Main Hee Hoon* [I

am her]. The visitor was shocked.[31]

Her co-workers

As can be seen from the filmography chapter, she worked with many well-known people. Mohan Pictures had a resident director, Nanubhai Vakil. Besides him, she worked with K Amarnath[32] and Mohan Sinha. Before joining Mohan Pictures, she had already been directed by Dwarka Khosla, Narottam Vyas and J P Advani. The music directors were Anil Biswas, Madhulal Damodar Master, Bhagatram (of the later Husnlal-Bhagatram duo), Alla Rakha Qureshi and, Firoz Dastoor, among others.

Her male co-stars were Yusuf Effendi, Nayampally, Navin Yagnik, Jayant, Master Shiraz, Prem Adib, Vasantrao Pehelwan, Ashik [sic] Hussain, Nazir, Ghulam Rasool, Yakub, W M Khan, Kumar, Mubarak, E Billimoria, Jeevan, and S Nazir.

Her female co-workers were Leela, Sardar Akhtar, Amirbai Karnataki, Ashalata, Leela Chitnis, Miss Gulzar, Ratanbai, Radha Rani, Anwari, Gulab, Vatsala Kumathekar, Violet Cooper and Ameena. Her elder sister Sarojini appeared with her in three films, *Hatimtai Ki Beti* (1940), *Jadui Kangan* (1940), and *Taj Mahal* (1941).

Indurani fondly remembered many of them and talked about them with her family. In her opinion, a certain Ashik Hussain, her co-star from *Chashmawali* (1939) was one of the best dancers in Hindi cinema. Unfortunately, nothing much is known about him except that he was the dance director of Kidar Sharma's *Neel Kamal* (1947), starring Begum Para, Raj Kapoor and Madhubala.

31 This story is similar to the one told about Saigal. Once Saigal answered the doorbell and a visitor announced that he wanted to see K L Saigal. He went inside, put on his wig on his bald head and returned to the door. The visitor recognized him then!

32 K Amarnath also directed four Tamil films for Mohan Pictures, see his entry on p 42 of in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema (1999).*

HER LIFE AFTER FILMS

Life After Films

As mentioned earlier, Indurani kept up her training hoping to get a chance to act again. It never happened.

She passed her time reading, visiting friends, and taking care of her family. Nagma mentions her favorite authors and the magazines, in her tribute to her mother, in the Appendix. Nagma also talks about her life-long passion for learning new things and dancing.

> **Famous Bombay architect was Noorani. His brother Noorani was a ballroom dance teacher in Bombay. When my mother in her later years went to England with Salim, she met his teacher Ozzie from Sacred heart school. His teacher Ozzie asked Ammaji for a ballroom dance. Ammaji was embarrassed that she did not know the fox trot, so on her return to Bombay she enrolled for dance lessons with Noorani and became excellent at Fox trot, rock and roll, Cha Cha Cha, Rumba and Samba. She did not like being held close during the Tango lesson and so discontinued her classes. All of us girls were teenagers then and including Jiji (Azra) took lessons from Noorani.**
>
> **To go back to her passion for dancing, in the movie days she learnt dancing from Ashik Hussain. My sister Dilshad remembers her stating that no woman could walk the Kathak 'taal' as gracefully as Ashik Hussain. So in recent years I was showing her the dance steps I learnt from Gopi Krishna's dance classes, she criticized me and said the 'nazakat' of Kathak was not present in my style, she subsequently performed a 'mudra' of a scene of Krishna teasing Radha. With much grace she curved her waist and bent down to pick up the 'ghada' or 'matka' of water, then walked with the 'matka' swaying her hips, did the action of Krishna throwing the pebble to break**

the matka and the action of the water pouring down Radha's body. She said this was the kind of grace taught by Ashik Hussain. Famous tabla player Alla Rakha came to our house to play tabla for her during her dance lessons. As a child I have many memories of Ammaji taking private Bharat Natyam/ Manipuri lessons from Arjun Desai who ran a school in Santa Cruz, as children, us girls also went to his school. Ishrat bungalow resounded to the sound of 'dhim tana derena tana derana' during Arjun Desai lessons.

Up to about 1945, Indurani made trips to her old house in Delhi taking her children along. Later she made trips to the UK and Europe. Salim Shah wrote about the trips:

Scotland was her first stop to visit her sister Dr. Rahat in 1962. I asked her to bring along my teenage brother Fahim before SSC results as I was confident he will pass. ... I flew in from USA and got everything organized. Then four of us flew to Paris to connect with my frat brother John who picked me, my mother and brother in the new VW to tour Europe. Dr. Rahat flew back to Glasgow after one week in Paris.

Ammaji was quite adept in making friends in most places. Small hotels or bread and boards. She then could help cook what we liked to eat. ... In Rome we stayed at a boutique hotel run by an elderly Jewish lady. Ammaji hit it off nicely with her and we got rice and lentils for dinner. Spicy omelet for breakfast. ... We stayed one week in Rome. We also spent a week in Madrid. Spain was cheaper.

We were sitting for lunch at a table lakefront in Interlaken Switzerland when I noticed a good looking man staring at my mother. He turned out to be none other than Raj Kapoor, probably scouting out locations for his film. Being nonchalant about big stars like Raj

Kapoor, we did not go over to his table to chat or ask for an autograph.

Ramniklal was older than Indurani by twelve years, was already married to Chanchalben and had two teenage daughters. Indurani was only slightly older than them. The two families lived in separate houses, Indurani in her *Ishrat Bungalow* and the other family elsewhere. In the beginning the two families remained aloof, but slowly, first the daughters, then their mother became very friendly with Indurani and her children. In fact, many a time Chanchalben cooked Jain food for her husband in Indurani's kitchen.

Both Ramniklal and Indurani were kind-hearted and generous to a fault. Salim told me about many incidents. When she was a child actress, Meena Kumari was desperately in need of money. Ramniklal gave her father Rs 5,000 and never asked it back. Another time, Nazir and Swarnlata came to her house in a very fancy car to borrow money. They went to Pakistan without repaying a 'paisa'.

Hashmat reminisced:

My mother always provided comfortable beds to the servants in our house. When she heard that the servants of the neighborhood building were sleeping outdoors, she provided blankets for all of them.

I asked my mother "Why do you pay advance money to Gangu all the time?" It's OK, she needs it now for her ration." "But, Ammaji, she will never pay you back" I replied. That's OK too, she said. That changed the way I was thinking and made me very generous not only to Gangu but the other servants as well. The end result: I bought an apartment for my cousin who did not have a roof over her head.

After Indurani's son Salim moved to US in 1960, got married to Miss Francoise (from France) and had children, she visited them, first time in 1970. One by one all her family moved to US. In 1973 her husband Ramniklal passed away. So, she also moved permanently to US around 1977. In 1983, Salim took her to Mecca for Haj.

Her 80th birthday was celebrated at Delhi Palace Restaurant in San Fernando Valley with family and friends. The highlight was a concert by

Lakshmi Shankar, sister-in-law of Ravi Shankar. Ms Shankar sang the famous bhajan, '*vaishNav jan to taine kahiye*', Gandhi's and Indurani's favorite.

During her speech after she cut the cake, Indurani joked about being used to having an overhead boom mike rather that the one in her hand. Afterwards everybody, including Indurani, got down to the floor and danced to Bollywood and other songs. In the video one can hear '*kudiyaan shahar diyaan*' by Daler Mehndi from the film *Arjun Pandit* (1999).

One day before the celebration, she talked about her life story. This was in Fahim's house. The proceedings of the birthday and the interview were video-taped. I was lucky to view copies of both the tapes. It is a delight to watch her speak with confidence and poise. I have benefited tremendously from watching her.

She passed away in 2012.

SAROJINI

Illustration 1: Sarojini as Mumtaz in Taj Mahal (1941)

Image from *filmindia*, February 1943

Sarojini was the screen name of Roshan Jehan, the second elder sister of Indurani. She was born in Delhi in 1920. As mentioned earlier, she is the one who got a letter from Saraswati Cinetone Co, Poona to appear for a screen test.

She was active in films from 1935 to 1946, most of them made by

Paramount Pictures and Mohan Pictures.

As mentioned earlier, she married Nanubhai Vakil, in 1943. They had two daughters. The elder, Azra, became a well-known actress, and is known for her roles in such films as *Mother India* (1957) and *Gunga Jumna* (1962). She married Firoz, a young man hailing from a leading building and construction company of Bombay. She lives in one of the western suburbs of Bombay. The younger daughter, Rehana, became a flight attendant, is a widow and lives in San Antonio, TX, US.

Sarojini passed away in 1993, while her husband, Mr Vakil died in 1980.

Here is a list of films she acted in:

1. *Shree Satya Narayan* (1935), Model Pictures Corpn, Poona, with Leela Chitnis, Indurani, Mr Vijaya
2. *Madhu Bansari* (1939), Paramount Pictures Co, Bombay, with Shankar Vazre, Vatsala Kumathekar
3. *Sansar Naiya* (1939), Paramount-Eastern Liberty Pictures, Bombay, with Navinchandra, Noorjehan Sr
4. *Son of Alladin* (1939), Paramount Film Co, Bombay, with Shankar Vazre, Ranibala
5. *Deepak Mahal* (1940), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Anil Kumar, Baby Indira
6. *Hatimtai Ki Beti* (1940), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Indurani, Anil Kumar, Anwari
7. *Jadui Kangan* (1940), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Indurani, Master Shiraz, Gulab
8. *Jadui Bandhan* (1941), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Shiraz, Rafique, Ansari
9. *Sanskar* (1940), National Studios, Bombay, with Rose, Harish, Jyoti
10. *Taj Mahal* (1941), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Indurani, M Kumar, Mubarak
11. *Farmaan* (1942), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Anil Kumar, W M Khan, S Nazir
12. *Naya Zamana* (1943), Mohan Pictures, Bombay, with Rajnikant, S Nazir, Alaknanda
13. *Son of Hatimtai* (1945), Bharat Productions, Bombay, with Navinchandra, Prakash, Ansari
14. *Circus King* (1946), Bharat Productions, Bombay, with Brijrani, Baburao Pehelwan, Cuckoo

INDURANI'S FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM

Note: All the images in this chapter have been provided by Indurani's family. Their help is greatly appreciated.

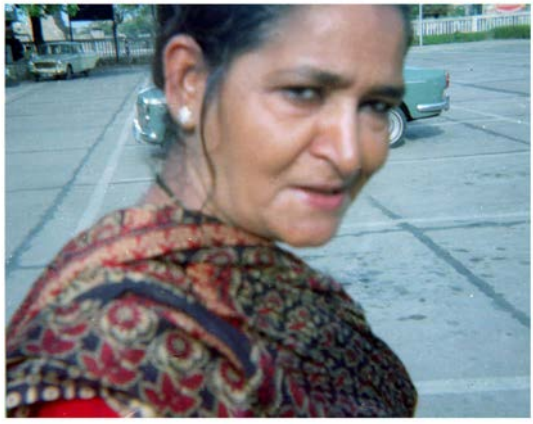


Illustration 2: Indurani c 2000s

Illustration 3: Indurani c 1937

Illustration 4: Ramniklal-Indurani portrait c 1945

Illustration 5: Ramniklal passport photo 1968

Illustration 6: Indurani passport photo 1994

Illustration 7: Indurani portrait

Illustration 8: Ramniklal and Indurani Ishrat Bungalow 1970

Illustration 9: Salim and Indurani c 1985

Illustration 10: Hashmat and Indurani in Bombay

Illustration 11: Indurani with Hashmat

Illustration 12: Indurani with Dilshad 2006

Illustration 13: Dilshad, Indu, Hashmat and Ratan

Illustration 14: Indu, Hashmat, Nagma and Dilshad.

Nagma's daughter Saira performed Bharat Natyam.

Illustration 15: Indurani with Ratan

Illustration 16: Salim's older son Alex's graduation

From Torrey Pines High School in 1987. Reza is on the right.

Illustration 17: Salim's younger son Reza's graduation.

From Torrey Pines High School in 1989.

Illustration 18: Indurani with Sean Carney

Illustration 19: Indurani look-alike Shannon Carney

Illustration 20: Wedding of Smarari Dhruv (mid-60s, Santa Cruz).

Smarari was a young neighbor of Indurani. From left: Nagma, Hashmat, bride, groom, Indu, Dilshad. In front, behind the small girl in white dress is Ratan

Illustration 21: Indurani ritual feeding Theresa

Salim's son Alex's bride, on her Mehndi night 1994.

Illustration 22: Indurani dancing, Reza and Sonia wedding 2006

Illustration 23: Indurani with Reza and Sonia, wedding 2006

Illustration 24: Indu with Captain

Illustration 25: Indurani Mrs Suvarna Chitre c 1997

Mrs Chitre is the wife of the well-known Astronomer and mathematician, Prof S M Chitre, who was Salim's mathematics tutor in early 50s.

Illustration 26: Hashmat, Indurani and Shano.

Shano is granddaughter of Indurani's sister Afroz.

Illustration 27: Salim holding Gaby.

Gaby is Indurani's first great grand daughter. Next to Indurani is Simone (Fahim's daughter) and Saira (Nagma's daughter).

Illustration 28: Nabila, Indurani with mike, Ratan

Nabila was the best friend of Almas, spent frequent summers at *Ishrat Bungalow*, became like real aunt to Indurani's children. She was married to lyricist Shevan Rizvi.

Illustration 29: Indurani giving a speech

Behind: Ratan, Nagma, Dilshad, Salim, Fahim. Next to Indurani: Francoise, Simone (Fahim's daughter), Saira.

Illustration 30: Indurani tombstone at the Conejo Mountain Memorial Park, Camarillo, CA

IMAGE GALLERY

The first image of a screen capture from the video, as mentioned before, is available on YouTube. All others are from the *filmindia* magazine and film booklets. The magazines are from the collection of Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz', Harish Raghuvanshi and the *Internet Archive* (from their *The Museum of Modern Art Library, NY* collection.) The booklets are from the collection of Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz'. Some of the images were provided by members of Indurani's family. However, the ultimate sources are as mentioned above. My deepest thanks to all of them.

Illustration 31: The earliest image, from Savitri 1936

BULL DOG
WITH INDURANI MAJID EFFENDI GOPE & OMKAR AND A NOTABLE CAST/
A DARYANI PRODUCTION
A GVALANI BROS Release
HE NEVER KNEW WHETHER THE VOICE FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS WILL SEND HIM to HIS FAME and GLORY OR TO . . . ! ! !
An epic of runaways rising against LAW !!!
Watch its release at
SUPER TALKIES, BOMBAY

Illustration 32: Bull Dog ad

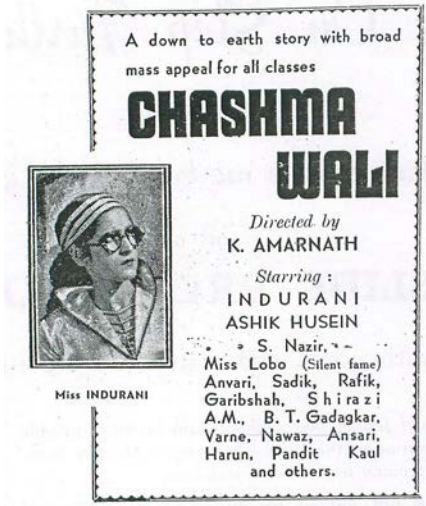

A down to earth story with broad mass appeal for all classes
CHASHMA WALI
Directed by
K. AMARNATH
Starring :
INDURANI
ASHIK HUSEIN
S. Nazir,
Miss Lobo (Silent fame)
Anvari, Sadik, Rafik, Garibshah, Shirazi A.M., B. T. Gadagkar, Varne, Nawaz, Ansari, Harun, Pandit Kaul and others.
Miss INDURANI

Illustration 33: Chashmawali ad

Illustration 34: Zevar ad

Illustration 35: Zevar ad

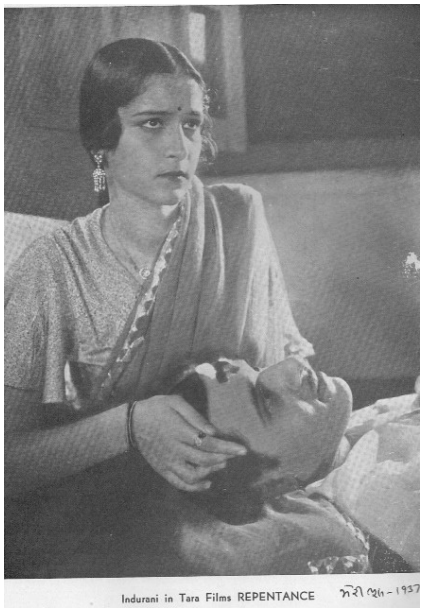


Illustration 36: Meri Bhool

Illustration 37: Meri Bhool

ere, meet Amir Karnatki and Indu Rani two able artistes who have given a popular performance in "Insaf" a Dariani Production.

Illustration 38: Insaaf

Illustration 39: Sunehra Baal

Illustration 40: Veer Bala

Illustration 41: Bhedi Kumar

IDURANI—
This smart one you will see in "Chasmawalli" a Mohan mystery thriller coming to the screen very shortly.

Illustration 42: Chashmawali

Illustration 43: Chashmawali

Illustration 44: Chashmawali

Illustration 45: Chashmawali

44 Indu Rani and Ashik Hussein in "Chashmawalli" a Mohan Picture.

Illustration 46: Chashmawali

48 Players from 'Swastik' a Mohan Picture now running at the Krishna Cinema.

Illustration 47: Swastik

Indurani and Sushil Kumar have a tete a tete in Mohan Pictures' 'Swastik' now running at Krishna Talkies.

40

Illustration 48: Swastik

Indu Rani in Mohan Pictures Swastika directed by Mohan Sinha.

Illustration 49: Swastik

Illustration 50: Midnight Mail

Illustration 51: Hatimtai Ki Beti

Illustration 52: Hatimtai Ki Beti

YAKUB and INDU RANI in a gipsy situation in the next gipsy picture of Mohan Studios

Illustration 53: Tatar Ka Chor

Indurani in "Allauddin Leila" a Mohan picture.

Illustration 54: Allaudin Laila

Illustration 55: Bulbul-e-Baghdad

Illustration 56: Bulbul-e-Baghdad

Indurani in "Zevar", a social story of Mohan Pictures.

Illustration 57: Zevar

DETAILED FILMOGRAPHY

Preparing a filmography for any actor can be full of problems. The well-known film researcher Ashish Rajadhyaksha delineated some of them in his article[33], *Reconstructing the Indian Filmography*. In preparing filmographies, he refers to the *Geet Kosh* tradition started by the legendary work of Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz' and his followers, such as Biswanath Chatterjee, Harish Raghuvanshi, Murlidhar Soni, Bhimraj Garg, and others.

However, even knowing the names of films from *Geet Kosh*, one is faced with the problem of similar names. For example, in preparing the filmography of Indurani, Harish Raghuvanshi ran into similar names like Indu, Indu Rani, Indukumari, Indubala. Luckily, Indurani was alive at that time and she could remember which movies were hers. In a few cases, she could not say with certainty, but the problem was solved by looking at the film booklets, which usually have photos of the stars.

The following filmography is the joint result of the collective work by Indurani, Salim Shah, Nagma Gandhi, and Harish Raghuvanshi.

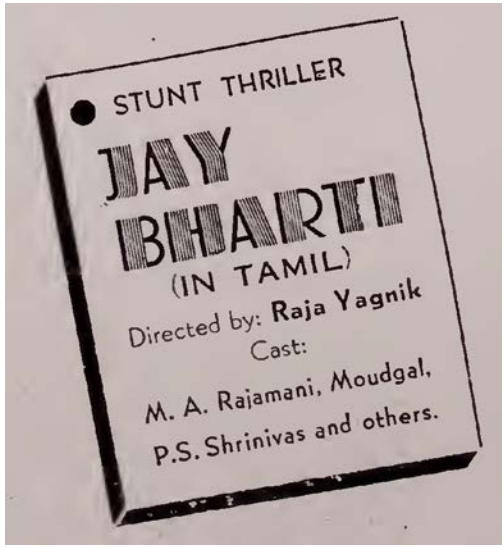


Illustration 58: Jay Bharti (Tamil)

Except for one Marathi movie, all other are Hindi talkies. Nagma also mentioned that Indurani told her that she danced in a Tamil movie with a

33 See pp 13-21, *Journal of the Moving Image, Issue 9 (2010).*

name something like 'Jay Bharat'. I found a Tamil movie called *Jay Bharti* (1939) produced by Mohan Pictures, mentioned in an ad in the *filmindia* October 1939 issue. Most likely this is the film that Indurani danced in, although she is not credited. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get more information about this film[34].

For other films, I have obtained the information beyond the film name and the year from the booklets provided by Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz' and consulting his *Hindi Film Geet Kosh, Volumes 1 and 2*. For the Marathi film, I have used the booklet kindly provided by Prakash Magdum and Arti Karkhanis, both of the National Film Archives of India, Poona.

ISHRAT KI MAUT 1935

It is ironic that her first movie turns out to have this name, her own name being Ishrat! Even more amazing is the fact that Indurani played the role of Ishrat, the vamp dancer, who was killed.

Chintu Khan, the king of Chakzai was marching to conquer the neighboring Khosros, when the villainous vizier from that kingdom appeared to conspire against his king. However, a spy from Khosros appeared in time to kill the vizier. When Ata accidentally entered Ishrat's bedroom and quietened her, she spotted a strange ring on his finger.

In the meantime, Khan's daughter Feroza, who dressed around as a male meets Ata and falls in love with him. Ishrat wanted to marry Ata instead, so she enticed him to her bedroom, where she was seen by Khan who killed her. After the usual twists, Ata marries Feroza and they jointly inherit the Kingdom.

Genre	Stunt
Cast	Miss Dilara, Miss Suhail, Miss Menaka, Vasantrao Pehelwan, Mr Panna Kapoor, Godbole, Jawadekar, Rashid, Master Babalal, Indurani (uncredited)
Production Company	Sikandar Cinetone Co, Poona
Director	M Murtaza

34 There is a Tamil film from 1935, *Naveena Sadaram*, in which an Indubala is credited. It is not clear where this was produced and if this actress is Indurani. See the article on the list of Tamil films in *Wikipedia*.

Music Director	Unknown
Lyricist	Unknown
Number of Songs	7
Theatre of Release	Unknown
Comments	Also known as *100 Lashes*. The film was shot at the Saraswati Cinetone Co studios, where Bhal G Pendharkar supervised the production. It is not known if Indurani sang any songs.

SHREE SATYA NARAYAN 1935

This film is based on the famous Satya Narayan Pooja Katha. Indurani played the role of Kalavati. the daughter of Lilavati and Sadhuram. She was born as a boon to Sadhuram, when he promised Lord Shree Satya Narayan that he would perform a pooja if a child was born to them. Sadhuram in his greed forgets everything and passes through many misfortunes. but in the end he is forgiven when he repents.

Genre	Mythological
Cast	Leela Chitnis, Indurani (listed as Miss Indubala), Mr Vijaya, Godbole, Chaube, Sarojini[35]
Production Company	Model Pictures Corpn, Poona
Director	Drupad Roy
Music Director	Somnath Patpat
Lyricist	Pt Radheshyam Kathavachak

35 Indurani asked Mr Patpat to give a role to Sarojini. He agreed.

Number of Songs	11
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	It is not known if Indurani sang any songs.

Illustration 59: Shree Satya Narayan 1935 booklet cover

Director	Bhal G Pendharkar
Music Director	Prof Sureshbabu
Lyricist	Bhal G Pendharkar
Number of Songs	13
Theater of Release	Majestic Cinema, Bombay

Comments	The video is available on YouTube on Rohit Padalkar's channel.

Illustration 60: Savitri booklet cover

FIDA-E-WATAN 1936

It is listed as a the tale of Roman courage. Indurani plays the role of Aedonea, sister of the half-wit king Horatio. When the evil queen Julia wants to kill the heir prince, Aedonea manages to escape with him and, after many twists and turns, kills Julia with the help of sympathetic villagers and restores order.

Genre	Costume Drama
Cast	Miss Sardar Akhtar, Miss Gulzar, Miss Indu Rani, Miss Amir Karnataki, Mr Yusuf Effendi, Mr D Manek, Prem Adib, Mr Omkar, Mr K Kripalani, Mr Majid, Master Chandur Kumar, Gope
Production Company	Daryani Productions, Bombay
Director	G R Sethi
Music Director	Anil Biswas and Jhande Khan
Lyricist	Gauri Shankar Lal 'Akhtar'
Number of Songs	10
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Also known as *Tasveer-e-Wafa* Not known if Indurani sang any songs

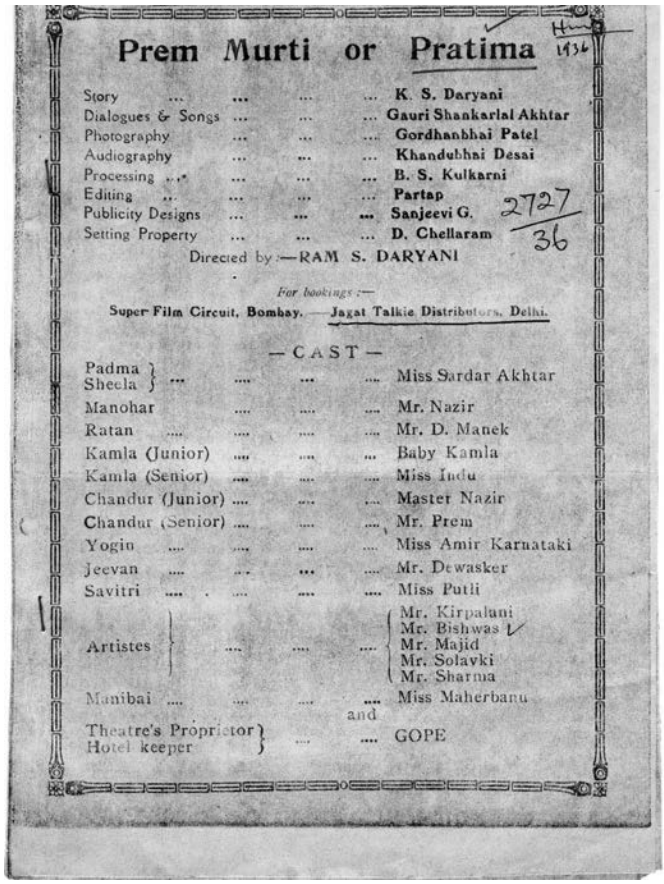
Illustration 61: Fida-e-Watan booklet cover

PRATIMA 1936

This was her first film in Bombay. Indurani plays the role of Kamla, a child nursed and brought up by Padma who, because of a misunderstanding with her husband Manohar, created by a neighbor Ratan, joins a theatrical company and becomes a star. In the meantime, her son Chandar grows up and falls in love with her, not realizing that she is his mother. After a few twists, all is well again.

Genre	Social
Cast	Miss Sardar Akhtar, Miss Nazir, Mr D Manek, Baby Kamla, Miss Indu, Master Nazir, Mr Prem Adib, Miss Amir Karnataki, Mr Dewaskar, Miss Putli, Mr Kripalani, Mr Bishwas, Mr Majid, Mr Solavaki, Mr Sharma, Miss Maherbanu, Gope
Production Company	Daryani Productions, Bombay
Director	Ram S Daryani
Music Director	Anil Biswas
Lyricist	Gauri Shankar Lal 'Akhtar'
Number of Songs	8
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Also known as *Prem Murti* Two songs sung by Indu *prem maalaa prem maalaa prem maalaa,* *main pheroongee dam-dam rom-rom-men*

	Thikaanaa priytam ko hai, kafan premee ke daaman men



Prem Murti or Pratima

Story	K. S. Daryani
Dialogues & Songs	Gauri Shankarlal Akhtar
Photography	Gordhanbhai Patel
Audiography	Khandubhai Desai
Processing	B. S. Kulkarni
Editing	Partap
Publicity Designs	Sanjeevi G.
Setting Property	D. Chellaram

Directed by :—RAM S. DARYANI

For bookings :—

Super Film Circuit, Bombay. — Jagat Talkie Distributors, Delhi.

— CAST —

Padma / Sheela	Miss Sardar Akhtar
Manohar	Mr. Nazir
Ratan	Mr. D. Manek
Kamla (Junior)	Baby Kamla
Kamla (Senior)	Miss Indu
Chandur (Junior)	Master Nazir
Chandur (Senior)	Mr. Prem
Yogiu	Miss Amir Karnataki
Jeevan	Mr. Dewasker
Savitri	Miss Putli
Artistes	Mr. Kirpalani, Mr. Bishwas, Mr. Majid, Mr. Solavki, Mr. Sharma
Manibai	Miss Maherbanu
Theatre's Proprietor / Hotel keeper	and GOPE

Illustration 62: Cover not available, First page of booklet of Pratima

BULL DOG 1937

Indurani plays the role of Indu, the pride of a criminal gang, called Bull Dogs. She helps rescue Sirish, who earlier being a member of the gang and having been to jail, decides to go straight. Indu loves Sirish dearly, even though she knows that she has no future with him. In the end Indu sacrifices herself, and Sirish and Asha (a girl he met earlier) raise a monument in memory of the goodhearted Bull Dog, Indu.

The film was reviewed in *filmindia*. The reviewer generally did not like the picture, said this about acting:[36]

> **Barring Indu and Gope, everyone is apologetic. Effendi fails to convince though he sings one song pretty well.**

36 *filmindia*, vol 3, issue 6, p 41.

Genre	Stunt
Cast	Indu, Ashalata, Yusuf Effendi, Majid, Ramlal, D Manek, Omkar, Gope
Production Company	Daryani Production. Bombay
Director	Dwarka Khosla
Music Director	Anil Biswas
Lyricist	Gauri Shankar Lal 'Akhtar'
Number of Songs	9
Theater of Release	Super Talkies, Bombay
Comments	Two songs by Indu *prem ke geet main gaaoon tumhaare, aur naheen kuchh dhandhaa* *he jotinmay jyoti saagar, deen ke man men samaaye*

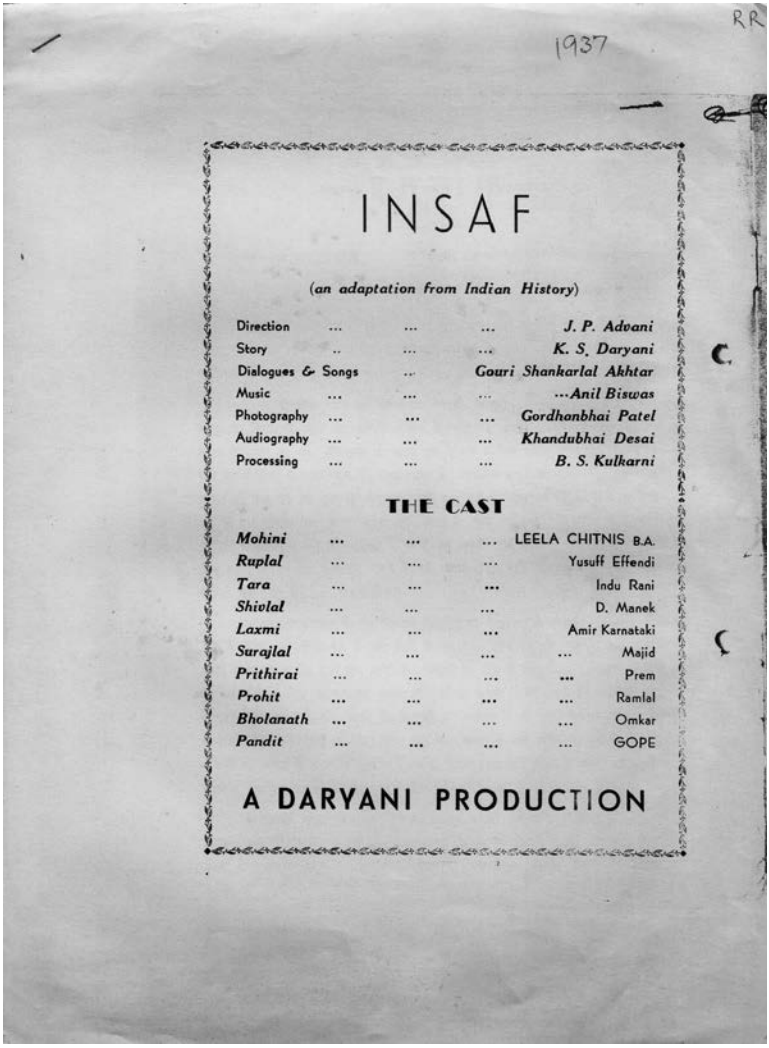
Illustration 63: Bulldog booklet cover

INSAF 1937

An adaptation from Indian history.

Indurani plays the role of Tara, sister of Rooplal, a lascivious prince of an imaginary kingdom. He kills newlywed Mohini's husband and kidnaps her. She escapes and extracts revenge on the whole royal family.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Leela Chitnis BA, Yusuf Effendi, Indu Rani, D Manek, Amir Karnataki, Majid, Prem Adib, Ramlal, Omkar, Gope
Production Company	Daryani Productions, Bombay
Director	J P Advani
Music Director	Anil Biswas
Lyricist	Gauri Shankar Lal 'Akhtar'
Number of Songs	9
Theater of Release	West End Talkies, Bombay
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs


1937

RR

INSAF

(an adaptation from Indian History)

Direction	*J. P. Advani*
Story	*K. S. Daryani*
Dialogues & Songs	*Gauri Shankarlal Akhtar*
Music	*Anil Biswas*
Photography	*Gordhanbhai Patel*
Audiography	*Khandubhai Desai*
Processing	*B. S. Kulkarni*

THE CAST

Mohini	LEELA CHITNIS B.A.
Ruplal	Yusuff Effendi
Tara	Indu Rani
Shivlal	D. Manek
Laxmi	Amir Karnataki
Surajlal	Majid
Prithirai	Prem
Prohit	Ramlal
Bholanath	Omkar
Pandit	GOPE

A DARYANI PRODUCTION

Illustration 64: Cover not available, First page of Insaf booklet

MERI BHOOL 1937

Indurani plays the role of Miss Shanti, the only daughter of Sir Santosh and believes in Indian traditional values with regard to dating and marriage whereas Ganga, a medical student, believes in the ideas of modern love. Pramode, who is already married, likes to seduce young girls and works his magic on Shanti, Ganga, and Chandra, who was about to kill herself.

After lots of twists and turns, including Ganga having his child, Chandra opening an ashram for destitute girls and Shanti about to get married to Pramode, all is well in the end.

Genre	Social
Cast	S B Nayampally, Navin Yagnik, Indurani, Kokila, Shivrani, Paresh Banerjee (Radio Star), Leila Pawar, S K Singh (BA LLB), Chowdhary, S Dutt, Gulzar, Anwar Shaikh (Young Sandow), Naran
Production Company	Tara Films
Director	Shelee Ghosh
Music Director	Shivrani Ghosh
Lyricist	Pandit Indra
Number of Songs	9
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Also known as *Repentance*, *Kunwari Patni, Unmarried Wife*. Not known if Indurani sang any songs

MR. X 1938

It is not known what role Indurani played. Hemlata, an educated girl falls in love with Surendra, a poet, but ends up marrying Prem, a young dashing barrister. Surendra almost commits suicide. Hemlata has a child, Prem shoots Surendra, who loses an arm. Hemlata becomes a stage actress, the boy grows up and meets her, but is kidnapped by bad guys. Hemalata kills the kidnapper and Prem defends her in court and forgives her.

Genre	Social
Cast	Ratanbai, Jayant, Ranjit, H Sivdasani, Indurani, Anant Marathe, Lalloobhai, Shyamsunder, Kiran Sashi, Zaverbhai, Munshi Khanjar, Athavale, Pasha, Jal Writer, Vithaldas, Lekharaj and others
Production Company	Prakash Pictures, Bombay
Director	Dwarka Khosla
Music Director	Shankar Rav Vyas and Lallubhi Nayak
Lyricist	Pandit S L Srivastav 'Anuj'
Number of Songs	12
Theater of Release	Super Talkies, Bombay
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 65: Mr X booklet cover

SUNEHRA BAAL 1938

Indurani plays the role of princess Chandra of Ballabh Gurh. Here a yogi had predicted that a farm boy would go to 'patal puri', get the Golden Hair and marry the princess. The King is not too happy about the whole thing and creates many obstacles, which the hero is able to overcome with the help of the princess who loves him.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Indu Rani, Shariffa Banu, Shamma Devi, Radha Rani, Dadiba Sarkari, Pt Badri Prasad, F M Shah, Ali Dadan, Vasantrao Pehelwan, Kishore
Production Company	Ram Movietone, Bombay
Director	Pandit Narottam Vyas
Music Director	Firoz Dastoor
Lyricist	Not known
Number of Songs	9
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Also known as *Golden Hair* Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 66: Sunehra Baal booklet cover

VEER BALA 1938

Indurani plays Shobha, a village belle who loves Pratap. An evil minister is ruling a nearby kingdom and his sepoys try to kidnap Shobha, but both Shobha and Pratap fight bravely. The minister does not give up and shows up at their wedding, but our brave pair fool him and almost escape. But Shobha is kidnapped and is kept in jail by the prince. The minister sees a sign on her hand and realizes that she is his long lost daughter. After a few more twists all is well.

Genre	Costume Drama
Cast	Master Shiraz, Master Kabuli, Garibsha, S Pasha, Sher Ali, Haroon, Azar Ansari, Indurani, Firoza, Vidya Devi
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	A R Kabuli
Music Director	Amoolya Charan Biswas
Lyricist	A R Kabuli
Number of Songs	7
Theater of Release	Globe Talkies, Bombay
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

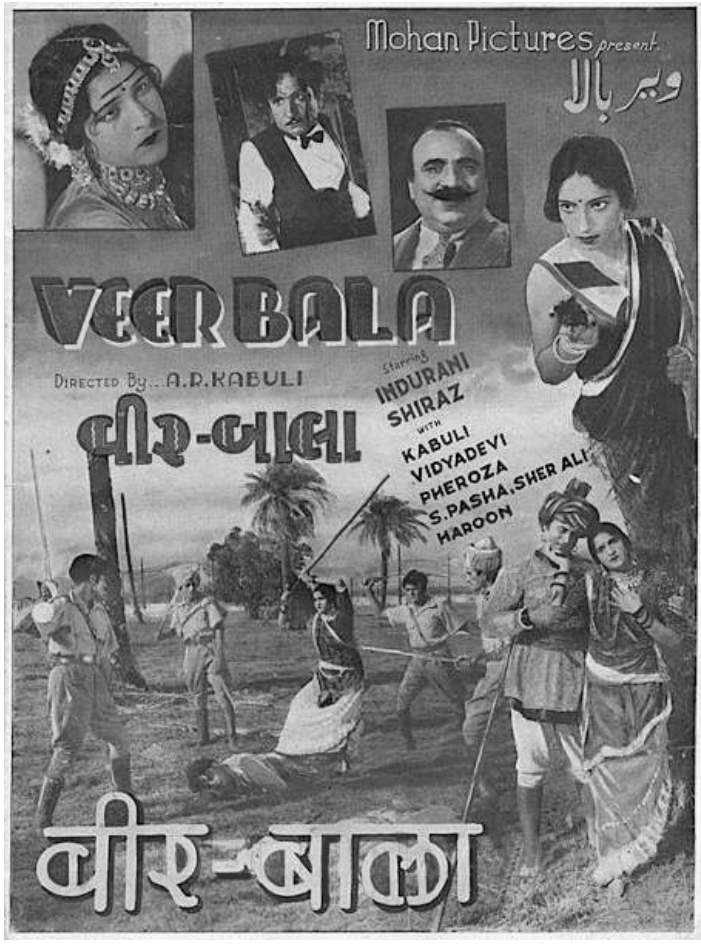


Illustration 67: Veer Bala booklet cover

BHEDI KUMAR 1939

Indurani plays Brijrani, the lovey and charming daughter of Mohansinha, the minister of Rajdurga. She falls in love with Vanvir, a defender of the poor, but the evil Rajpal has his designs on her. In the meantime, Vanvir learns from his adopted father that he is the real heir and Rajpal had killed his father. After the usual twists and fights, all is well.

Genre	Costume Drama
Cast	Yashwant Dave, Mr Sadik, N K Mishra, Garibsha, Vasant Pahelwan, Gulamkadar, Ansari, Shirazi A M, Rafique, Haroon, Nawaz, Gulam Mahomed, Mirza, Miss Indurani, Urmila Devi, Baby Indira, Mehdi Reza, Shahzadi etc.
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	Chunilal Parekh
Music Director	Bhagatram
Lyricist	Munshi B P Mathur
Number of Songs	10
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

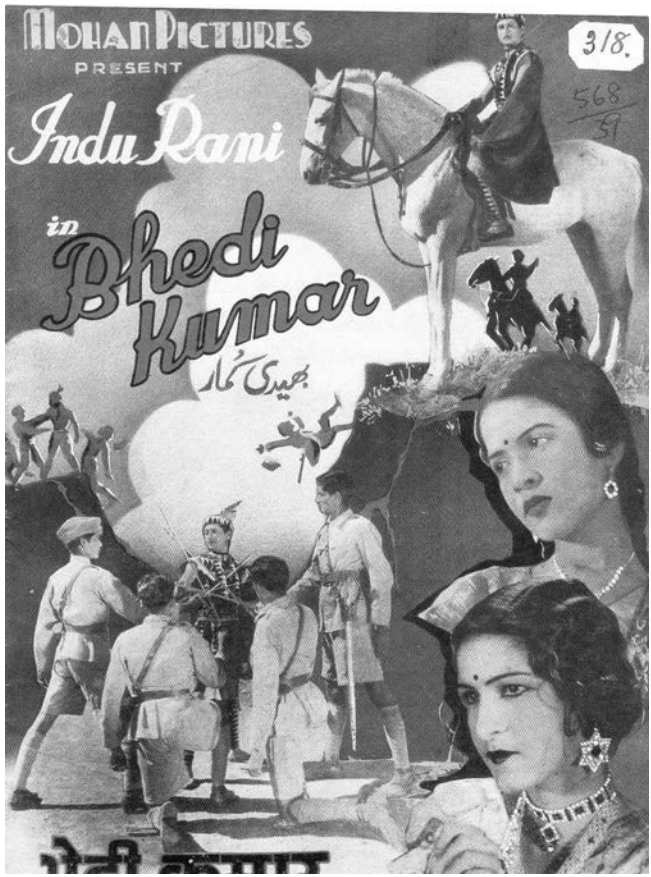


Illustration 68: Bhedi Kumar booklet cover

CHASHMAWALI 1939

Indurani plays a double role of Lata and chashmawali, dressed like Zorro. She comes from a rich family, but seeing the sufferings of the poor, decides to be a Robinhood like character, rob the rich and pay the poor. A clever police office Kumar is assigned to catch her, but falls madly in love with her. After the usual twits, all ends well.

Genre	Costume Drama
Cast	Miss Indurani, Ashik Hussain, S Nazir, Miss Lobo (Silent fame), S M Sadique, Anwari, Shirazi A M, Baby Indira, Baby Shanti, Balabhai, Azar Ansari, Haroon, B T Gadagkar, Rafique, Varne, Nawaz, Garibshah, Pandit Kaul
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	K Amarnath
Music Director	Pandit Bhagatram Batish
Lyricist	S Safdar
Number of Songs	8
Theater of Release	Diamond Talkies, Bombay
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

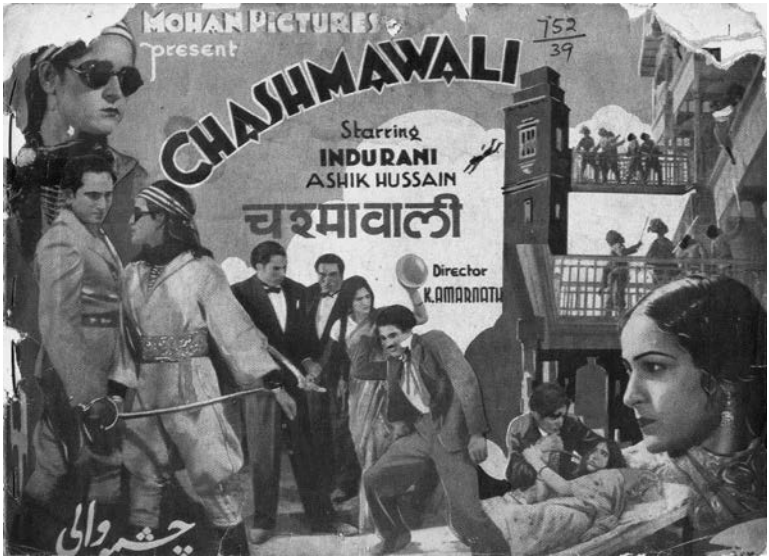


Illustration 69: Chashmawali booklet cover

MIDNIGHT MAIL 1939

It is not known what role Indurani plays in this film. It is the story of prince Ranjit having to return from England to take charge of his kingdom after his father's death, but himself a victim of a conspiracy hatched by the queen. After the usual twists, all is well.

Genre	Costume Drama
Cast	Miss Yasmin, Miss Indu Rani, Gulab, Nazir, S Nazir, Shirazi A M, Verne, Gulam Qadir, Sadique, Chandra Kant BA, Mishra, Garib Shah, Rafique, Nawaz, Chowdhary, Gulam Mahomed, Ananta
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	K Amarnath
Music Director	Bhagatram
Lyricist	Safdar Faizpuri
Number of Songs	7
Theater of Release	Imperial Cinema, Bombay. Also in Poona, Karachi and Nagpur
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 70: Midnight Mail booklet cover

SWASTIK 1939

Indurani plays the role of Indu, daughter of the Divan of Rajnagar. The story involves a college youth Jivan who believes in violence to achieve freedom and Vina who abhors violence. Once Jivan comes to the kingdom but is insulted by the prince. He starts a violent movement and is arrested and is to be hanged. Vina helps him and succeeds when the king releases Jivan. All is well in the end.

Genre	Social
Cast	Kumari Vina, Indurani, Madhubala, Baby Indira, Lily, Jeevan (O K Dar), Sushilkumar, Fakirmahomed, Nazir Bedi, Ghulam Rasool, Sadique, Medi Reza, Haroon, Madhu, Rafique, Ansari, Chowdhary, and hundreds of others

Production Company	Mohan Pictures
Director	Mohan Sinha
Music Director	Not known
Lyricist	Not known
Number of Songs	13
Theater of Release	Krishna Cinema, Bombay. Also at Majestic Cinema, Delhi
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

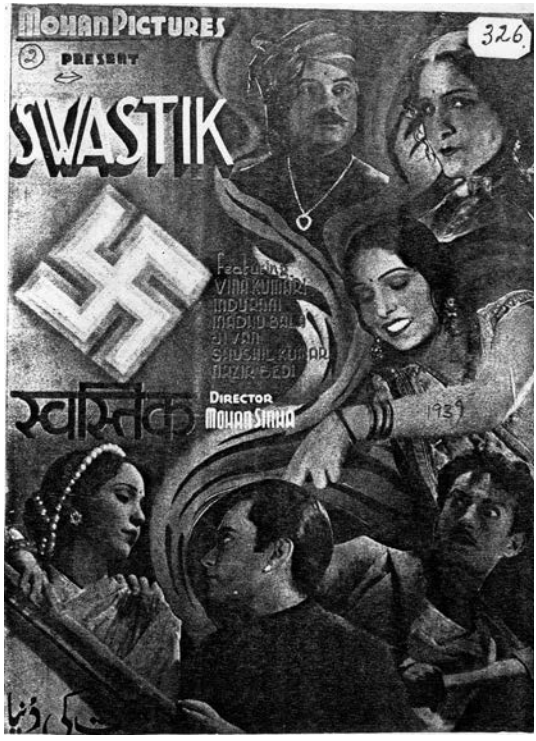


Illustration 71: Swastik booklet cover

HATIMTAI KI BETI 1940

Indurani plays Ezra, Roshan's friend. Neki and Badi, the goddesses of Good and Evil, respectively fight over who is superior by manipulating humans on Earth. Roshan, the daughter of Hatimtai, and Ezra are good friends. Roshan falls in love with Parviz the prince of Arabia. Badi with help from Satan creates many obstacles in their path. The Good wins in the end.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Miss Sarojini, Miss Indurani, Miss Anwari, Bibibai, Vidya Devi, Munshibai, Miss Panna, Anil Kumar, Garibsha, K Jan, Khalilkhan, Syed Ahmed, B T Gadagkar, F M Khan, Roshan, Banerji, Chowdhary
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	Nanubhai Vakil
Music Director	Madhulal Damodar Master and Bhagatram Assistant: Krishna Swami
Lyricist	Pandit 'Anuj'
Number of Songs	8
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 72: Hatimtai Ki Beti booklet cover

JADUI KANGAN 1940

Indurani plays the role of 'nag kanya' (serpent girl), and is kidnapped by the evil Sadanand, who uses her to get the boon of immortality by the god Dev. His guru tells him that it is not so and he would be killed by prince Jayant. The prince in turn is loved by both the princess Malaya and 'nag kanya'. After the usual plot points, this time involving two magic rings, all is well again.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Miss Sarojini, Miss Indurani, Miss Lily, Miss Vidya, Shiraz, Bachcha, Gadkar, Jayadev[37], Gulab, Khalilkhan, Garib Shah
Production Company	Mohan Pictures
Director	Nanubhai Vakil
Music Director	Not known
Lyricist	Pandit Fani
Number of Songs	11
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

37 The music director Jaidev is known to have acted in "stunt" films made by Wadia Bros, *Miss Frontier Mail* (1936). It is possible that this Jayadev is the same person.

Illustration 73: Jadui Kangan booklet cover

THIEF OF TATAR 1940

Indurani plays the role of Hamida, a blooming beauty who won the heart of the bandit Ahmar, who created havoc in the kingdom of Tatar after the king's brother-in-law usurped all power and the queen and her son had to escape. All is well in the end when the evil ruler is killed and peace returns to Tatar.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Yakub, Indurani, W M Khan, M Nawaz, Sadik, Awtar, Miss Gulab, Vatsala Kumathekar, Meera, Haroon, Chowdhary, Hiralal
Production Company	Mohan Pictures
Director	K Amarnath
Music Director	Ram Gopal Pande and Bhagatram R Batish
Lyricist	Ehsan Rizvi
Number of Songs	13
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Also known as *Tatar Ka Chor* Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 74: Thief of Tatar booklet cover

ALAUDIN LAILA 1941

Based on the book *Leila; or, the Star of Mingrelia* (1856) by George W M Reynolds. A silent film was made in Madras on the same story in 1931.

Indurani plays the role of Laila, princess of Magreliya. who after having fallen in love with Alaudin, the prince of Turkey, undertakes a perilous journey to meet him. After the usual fantastic adventures, all live happily ever after.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Master Jayant, Gulam Mahomed, Master Zahoor, S Alam, Mahomad Nawaz, Rafique, Azar Ansari, Pandit Kaul, Sadique, Miss Indurani, Ameena, Miss Violet Cooper, Vidya, Hira, Miss Gulab
Production Company	Mohan Pictures
Director	A M Khan
Music Director	Master Bashir
Lyricist	Munshi Nayab
Number of Songs	9
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 75: Alaudin Laila booklet cover

BULBUL-E-BAGHDAD 1941

Indurani plays the role of Bulbul, who loves Rashid and is living in Baghdad, when she is kidnapped by bandits, who take her to their leader Nadir, who happens to be the father of Rashid. But all is well in the end.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Indurani, Miss Gulab, Jayant, Yakub, Sadik, W M Khan, Gulam Rasool, A R Pehelwan, Anant Marathe and many others
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	K Amarnath
Music Director	Ram Gopal Pande
Lyricist	Ehsan Rizvi
Number of Songs	11
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 76: Bulbul-e-Baghdad booklet cover

TAJ MAHAL 1941

Indurani plays the role of princess Kaiser, who comes to Akbarabad to pay tribute to the newly declared emperor Shahjehan, but falls prey to the tricks of the palace maids and runs afoul of the emperor. The rest of the story is well-known.

Genre	Historical
Cast	M Kumar, Miss Sarojini, Indurani, Mubarak, Late Khalil Ahmed, S Nazir, Ram Marathe, Baby Suraiya, S Gulab, G Sharma, Miss Indira, A R Pehelwan, Mishra, Roshan, Miss Mira, Fakirmahomed
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	Nanubhai Vakil
Music Director	Madhulal Damodar Master
Lyricist	Bahzad Lakhnavi, Pandit 'Anuj', S Khaleel
Number of Songs	17
Theater of Release	Minerva Talkies, Bombay
Comments	It was Suriaya's first film as a child actress. Indurani sang 2 songs *un pe dil ho gayaa qurbaan* *bedard tujh ko pyaar kiyaa*

Illustration 77: Taj Mahal booklet cover

ZEVAR 1942

Indurani plays the role of Indira, an educated village girl who guides Jayant to his aunt's house, when he comes to inquire about the aunt's well-being. Jayant becomes a pauper and Indira comes to Bombay and both become radio singers. All is well in the end.

Genre	Social
Cast	Indurani, Jayant, E Billimoria, Jagan, Badriprasad, Rajkumari, Vinakumari, Indira, S Baburao, Mirajkar, Ranibala
Production Company	Mohan Pictures
Director	K Amarnath
Music Director	Pandit Badri Prasad
Lyricist	M A Sahir, Madhok
Number of Songs	8
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	Not known if Indurani sang any songs

Illustration 78: Zevar booklet cover

ALLAUDDIN KI BETI 1949

It is not known what role Indurani plays in this film. The film continued the narrative of the magic lamp, which is given by Allauddin to his daughter Hamida. The princess wants the lamp, but Hamida refuses. After a lot of fantastical happenings, all is well.

Genre	Fantasy
Cast	Prakash, Gulnar, Devraj, Leela Pandey, Master Bachcha, P D Lal, Muzaffar, S Abu, Burhan, Agashapur, Indu, Munis Badshajahan, Noorjehan Sr.
Production Company	Mohan Pictures, Bombay
Director	Nanubhai Vakil
Music Director	Alla Rakha Qureshi
Lyricist	Roopbani
Number of Songs	8
Theater of Release	Unknown
Comments	According to Salim Shah, the film was probably left incomplete by 1942-43 and was finished and released later.

Illustration 79: Allauddin Ki Beti booklet cover

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Indurani was many things to many people.

To her mother, she was a brilliant student, to her father, a much-appreciated additional breadwinner, to her children, an ideal mother, to her studios, a reputable and reliable star.

The readers of this biography can form their own opinions, but to me the following facets of her character stand out.

I have not heard of many children who cried when they were taken away from school, but Indurani did. Clearly, she loved learning new things, absorbing what she learned and eager to learn more. That sets her apart from millions of teenager girls in India at that time, who were content to stay at home helping their mothers, or helping in the farming chores in the villages, as that was the norm in those days.

Being eager to learn came in handy, when her life was given a jolt and she found herself in a movie studio. Here the ability to adjust to any circumstance showed up as another characterstic. She was trained by the studios in various skills that would be useful to her in her new role in life as a heroine in pictures. She took her training seriously in fact, she kept at it long after no more movies roles were forthcoming. This facet helped her become a successful heroine of the many studios she worked in.

When she started to work in the movies, she set goals for herself and worked hard to attain them. She must have dreamed of owning land and building a house for herself and her family. She worked double shifts so that she could earn enough money to fulfill her dream. She did and was written up in the *Times of India*. That was the third facet, work hard to attain worthy goals.

Her generous nature is another dimension of her character that stands out when you read the many stories told by her children.

During all the time I have been communicating with her family, however, one phrase kept coming up again and again, and I think that it is appropriate to end this book with it:

Knowledge is the Greatest Wealth!

APPENDIX

Family Tributes

Salim Shah

Our mother Ishrat Indurani Shah represents in many ways the typical homemaker of Indian Cultural tradition with primary responsibilities to the well being of her family and close relatives. Being fortunate to get a chance to become a star in the early days of the Indian Film Industry, she worked hard to acquire the required arts of singing, dancing and acting. Born with a prodigious memory, which was unblemished to the end of her life, she found it easier to deliver the dialogues as required by the script. She took to heart the advice of her mother that women should have their own career and a house in their own name. To achieve this goal she worked two shifts to earn a double salary and saved enough to have her own house before she was 18 years old in 1940. When she was asked to give up her career, she willingly accepted the role of a home maker who successfully raised six children. She did not interfere in their choice of career or of life partners. She led by example rather than words.

She was generous to a fault with all kinds of seekers who came to her for help, whether close relatives, friends or strangers. She was fearless in facing challenges, whether from petty mischief makers during the Mumbai Aamchi days of turmoil when hoodlums came to her gate chanting slogans to go back to Pakistan or from those thrown by fate. She willingly gave up her social life with friends in Mumbai to join her children in Southern California after her husband passed away.

She enjoyed her grandchildren, her regular exercise, prayer and watching soap operas on Indian TV channels in the last two decades of her life. She has left an indelible impression, especially on the girl grandchildren who are all high achieving success stories. Her tombstone has an apt favorite phrase of hers:

"Knowledge is the greatest wealth".

Hashmat Rahimtoola

My mother was a very loving and caring person. When she held my little finger and took me to school I was so proud of her. I whispered shyly to my friends "this is my mother".

There was a time when five of us kids were down with chicken pox and I remember her giving a sponge bath to all of us daily till we recovered

She was always there not only for her family and friends but the poor and downtrodden.

Her mind was always thirsty for knowledge, she had a photo memory and could absorb the geography and history of the world. She was an avid reader and a great cook.

She did her own stunts in the movies. She could swim, shoot the rifle, used the baton skillfully, knew Indian classical and folk dances. When Salim's school teacher who had migrated to England and asked her to dance with him she declined because she didn't know ball room dancing. Upon her return to Bombay she took classes and learnt fox trot, waltz, rumba, samba, Cha Cha Cha, twist, etc. She made sure that we were well versed in these dances also.

In all I would not exchange her for any other mother. She is the strength of my existence.

Dilshad Shah

There are so many memories of Ammaji. The most outstanding quality of hers was her passion and enthusiasm for anything she undertook. Whether it was making different types of Achaar (pickles) or discussing the content of novelists such as Dostoevsky, Maupassant or Dickens. Yes, she read the Russian, French and the British novelists, as well as romances such as Barbara Cartland and Daphne du Maurier. She introduced me to many novelists.

As Nagma mentions, we had no restrictions on buying books at the best bookstore in town! Her life long passion for reading continued with me perusing different libraries for large print editions. She lived in close proximity to the Camarillo Public Library. The problem was that she had read almost all of the novels that were best sellers, in both fiction and non fiction. She loved biographies and I remember her always discussing the biographies of Abraham Lincoln she had read. She admired and adored him. When I got her a book by Jimmy Carter on his mother, she fell in love with that book and made me promise I would read it! Luckily, I worked in a book store for many years, and my sister Ratan being a flight attendant would hunt at airport book shops for books that this remarkable lady had not yet read! Ratan spared no expense, buying new hard cover bestsellers for her. My brother Salim made a donation to the South Pasadena Public Library in her name and when you walk into the foyer of the library you can see her name amongst the donors. He did this more than 30 years ago when our library was being updated!

The South Pasadena Public Library
acknowledges with grateful appreciation those who so generously donated
a Skylight and Furnishings during nineteen hundred eighty one and eighty two
In honor of
Mrs. Ishrat Shah

Illustration 80: Library plaque

In Santa Cruz, at our "Ishrat Bungalow" my mother bought all the Erle Stanley Gardner and Agatha Christie novels, and the neighbors would borrow them from us. She also read Hafiz, Ghalib and Zauq.

My mother loved historical fiction and non fiction. She was an astute student of Geography and knew her Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and if I did not place a country correctly, she questioned my schooling! When she took her citizenship exam she asked the gentleman which country he was from and she knew exactly which part of South America he came from. He was so impressed that he did not ask her the questions regarding the presidents or the constitution. She was very disappointed because she had studied for her citizenship test. There are so many instances when her curiosity was intense, particularly regarding history. A few days before she died, she asked me about the great Russian novelist and I asked her if it was Dostoevsky. Yes, but she could not remember the title of the story she loved. It was *The*

***Gambler*. My mother was very intelligent with an eidetic memory. But what made her an incredible human being was her kind heart, helping strangers with generous actions, as well as unstinting giving of strength, love and wisdom to her children until her last breath.**

Nagma Gandhi

I would like to share some of my thoughts about my Mom's attributes.

I once was imagining what the title of a book on my mother could be. I came up with the idea of the title: My mother kissed the Torah.

She was very tolerant and accepted all faiths. She was attending a Bar Mitzvah ceremony of Micky Solomon's son (Fahim's friend) and during the ceremony she kissed the Torah. When asked why, she replied: it is my holy book too.

My friend Ferial Masry was having a fundraiser at our house when she was running for a state assembly seat. Tall handsome Rabbi from Thousand Oaks was at our house. I took him to meet my mother to her room. Ammaji was on the prayer mat finishing her Namaz. When she turned her head she saw the Rabbi standing in her doorway. The first thing she told him was that the Torah was the best book. This came from an 80 year old Muslim woman who just completed her prayers. So the Rabbi asked her why. She replied because it says in the Koran that when you cannot find the answer in the Koran, refer to the Torah. She had won the Rabbi's heart by now. She went on to tell him that all Arabs say Allah for God, it is just the Arabic name for God.

I was at a Hindu friend's home for a Puja. When it was

time for Aarti, everyone started singing Om Jai Jagdish Hare. My mom joined in, I asked her why. She said it was her favorite Bhajan and knew the whole Bhajan. She said it was in complete alignment with her faith.

Her Knowledge was deep and she kept up with the LA times best seller list for fiction and non fiction. Of course she became my walking encyclopedia and I miss referring to her with my questions. Growing up I remember her favorite authors were Daphne du Maurier, Jane Austen, Dickens. On the lighter side, she read all Perry Mason mysteries and Barbara Cartland romances. Subscribed to Movie Screen, Photoplay, True Stories, Readers Digest, Life Magazine, Woman and Home, all American and British magazines...

She encouraged us to read and had an account at the neighbor hood children's bookstore with Jules Menezes, where we could buy any book we liked.

Her memory was photographic: someone sent a picture of my father's movie 'mahurat' from before she joined the studio. The picture had all the cast and technicians at least a 100 people. She named everyone in the picture. 2 days before her death, she asked Dr Sanjeev Verma to check on her, because she sensed she was deteriorating and asked me to call him. He is a friend of Fahim and lives in the neighborhood. She repeated her first dialogues to him. She had recited these many times before, but the story about the impact of her first dialogue I heard that evening for the first time. The dialogue was about a powerful woman who is like a 'Sherni' (lioness). She said she stomped her foot as she said the dialogue, everyone was afraid of her after the dialogue and treated her with the utmost respect. She said: 'Mujhe pure studio mein koi nahin chedta tha, us dialogue ki wajah se!' [Because of that dialog, nobody

dared to touch her in the whole Studio.]

Ratan Shah

What can I say about this "Brilliant Star"? I am a mere shadow of her and my recollections are weak.

I did not inherit her clear vision, her no-nonsense approach, her amazing recollection, or her beauty! She was surely the strongest woman I have known, she stood her ground and she was not afraid of anyone's opinion of her, she was proud of who she was! She said that even after she gave birth to my brother Salim, that her waist was "21 inches" in size! She said her physical beauty was her bread and butter and she had to maintain herself! My father used to say that people climbed trees when she went for a walk, just to get a glimpse of her! How romantic is that?

What luckily I did inherit (to her credit), was her capacity for kindness and love, her approach towards religion, God and humankind and her tolerance! She said "the devil lives in the mullah's beard", and so to read everything that I believed, not to follow hearsay! That was my only obligation. She told me that the Quran was just a continuation of the Torah and the Bible! That it was better to believe in a higher power than not believe! That it didn't matter what religion you followed. That God was just an intense powerful light that shone everywhere, you could connect with that power from anywhere.

She set great examples everyday, she was up at 5 AM, said her prayers, exercised for at least an hour, made her morning "ginger, cardamom chai", ate a healthy breakfast and then cooked fresh food for the day, amazing 'Paratha's' and 'Daal' and fresh vegetables. We always had bowls of fruit adorning the counter. A

tradition followed by all her children! She was an incessant reader and often read late into the night! Her common knowledge was incredible as was her gift of mathematics.

When I got married, I did not want to insult her, so I asked her if it was okay to have alcohol served at the wedding? Her response was, "in the past, when kings got married, alcohol was permitted for that day"!!! How nice was that of her? Not only did she put me at ease, she also added that the Quran did not prohibit alcohol, that it said not to be intoxicated! Because of her we were all able to follow our own spiritual paths without criticism. What an amazing approach for modern society. "Pork, however, was not permitted", it was just plain bad for your health" Ha Ha, and none of us to this day have been able to consume pork.

From start to the end, her greatest gift other than her love was her need to see that every child received a great education! She personally stood in long lines at schools in Bombay to get admission for our cousins and other children! One of her amazing qualities was her instant and perfect recall of everything! She was the information highway of her day. Her memory was razor sharp as were her observation skills!

Ammaji was fiercely protective of her children and her grandchildren, and she never, ever put us down! She just gave us love, more love and lots of amazing great stories and sayings! I wish I could recall them all, as they were all awe inspiring. In every conversation with her she reflected on thoughts of great poets and short stories and "Shairs"!

Here are some of the stories I recall, a great way for a mother to give advice to her kids or for that matter

anyone that crossed her path.....

A man worked for a blacksmith. When the blacksmith (boss) got angry at his worker, the worker had no way to release his own frustrations, so in turn he twisted the ear of the blacksmith's donkey! ('Gadhe ka Kaan marrord dia'). Life lesson, everyone has to release their frustration and anger somewhere!

Don't spread your sheet farther than your own shadow.... lesson, live within your means.

A girl was given away in marriage. After the ceremony, the in-laws and groom had to cross a big river to get back to their village with the new bride. Along their trip across the river there was a big storm, nearly killing everyone. After saving their own lives, as an after thought they saved the bride. They had to go back to the bride's village to wait out the storm. While there, the bride whispered in her father's ear that her new family had almost left her to die. Thinking quickly, the father told the groom's family that he had forgotten one of the family's traditions ('rasam'), that after the marriage the groom must donate money to the village God or else they would be troubled with such mishaps like the storm. So the groom and his family donated the money. As they were leaving to cross the river again, the bride heard the groom's father say, "son, take great care of your bride, we have paid much for her"!!

The lesson here, value your self worth or others will not value you!

Lastly,

A boy was polishing shoes on the sidewalk to earn his living. A passerby in amazement said, "Son, what are you

doing? You are polishing shoes with a 'Pashmina' shawl!!! Why are you not using the t-shirt instead"?!! To this the boy replied..... "Oh this shawl, my parents gave me that, this t-shirt I bought for myself with my own money"!

I think the lesson here speaks for itself.

In fond memories of a wonderful woman.

Alex Shah

Indurani lived her entire life on her own terms and was comfortable in her skin. She never lost her edge for getting what she wanted, even after coming to the United States, where the challenges of language and culture did not deter her. Education was a quality she placed above all traits, and her confidence derived from her earned intelligence. She instilled in us this principle: no matter what the life challenged us with, no matter what unfairness might fall upon us, one's know-how, creativity, and education could never be taken away; education enabled one to always move forward and succeed. She laughed. She read. She discussed. She loved. Her contribution as the matriarch of our family has been missed. Most importantly to me, she satisfied my sweet tooth, patiently browning cream of wheat, adding cardamom, raisins, cashews, pistachios, almonds to make my favorite halwa that only Ammaji could make to perfection.

Riaz (Russ) Rahimtoola:

I lived with my grandma both in India and Pasadena.

She always told me to eat properly and **and don't worry be happy! She had a very carefree attitude and taught the true things in life that matter, eat healthy, love your family and have a spiritual path.**

I stayed with her she loved cooking and my fondest memory was when she had me buy ingredients from Trader Joe's and taught me how to make her favorite recipe of keema. I remember that recipe to this day.

Indurani's Family Tree

Mother's side:

Fateh Singh married a Goud Brahmin girl
Eldest son (name not known), Sant Singh, Bahadur Singh, Sunder (daughter).
Sant Singh married Zubeida or Nathia
Daughter, Munawwar Jehan (b 1904, d 1969)
Sunder married Baburam
Daughter, Munni

Father's side:

Zubeida married Sant Singh
Sheikh Mangoo (her brother) married Allahdi
Son Sheikh Imamuddin Siddiqui (b 1894, d 1978) married Munawwar Jehan
Siddique
Ismael
Shabbir

Sheikh Imamuddin and Munawwar Jehan's Children:

1. Afroz (b 1918, d ?), married Dr Bashir Kapoor from Jullundhur, had 4 sons and 2 daughters
2 boys have passed away
one daughter Naaz lives in LA
2. **Roshan (b 1920, d ?), also Sarojini, married Nanubhai Vakil, film director, had 2 daughters**
Azra, married Firoz
Rehana, married a boy (now deceased) from Bombay
3. **Ishrat (b 1922, d 2012), also Indurani, married Ramniklal Shah**
4. Naseem (b 1924, d ?), married twice and had 14 children
5. Rahat Begum (b 1928, d ?), married Dr Shaukat Minhas
a son Dr Sohail
6. Farhat (Shireen) (b ?, d ?), married Hasan Sehraj
3 girls
7. Almas (b 1932), married younger brother of Hasan, Mehmood Sheikh
1 son Sajid (Adam)

Indurani's Family:

1. Salim Shah, married Francoise
   Alex
   Reza
2. Hashmat Rahimtoola, married Rafique
   Riaz
   Samia
3. Fahim (Ashok) Shah, married Roshan
   Salik (deceased)
   Simone
4. Dilshad (Lisa) Shah, married Jack Robb
   Yusef
   Zahir
5. Nagma Gandhi, married Khainan KG Gandhi (deceased)
   Sabra
   Farouk
   Saira
6. Rena Ratan Shah, married John Carney
   Sean Henry Carney
   Shannon Ashley Carney

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Edwina: An Unsung Bollywood Dancer of the Golden Era (2015)

The RMIM Minibus (1992-): A Compendium of Selected Writings About Indian Films, Their Songs and Other Musical Topics From a Pioneering Internet Discussion Group (2017)

Music and Arts in Hyderabad Deccan: A Contribution to the History and Culture of Bygone Days (Edited only) (2017)